Satanic Feminism

Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture

PER FAXNELD

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OXFORD STUDIES IN WESTERN ESOTERICISM

Series Editor
Henrik Bogdan, University of Gothenburg

CHILDREN OF LUCIFER
The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism
Ruben van Luijk

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In loving memory of my mother,
Olga Christina Faxneld (1949–2016),
who was always there, and always inspired me

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Reverse everything. Make women the point of departure in judging, make darkness the point of departure in judging what men call light.

MARGUERITE DURAS (interviewed by Susan Husserl-Kapit in 1975)[1]

1

Introduction

SATAN AND THE SUFFRAGETTES: AN UNEXPECTED ALLIANCE

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century: A world-leading female esotericist, whose books sell hundreds of thousands of copies, designates Lucifer the bringer of enlightenment. In Paris, a lesbian poetess publishes a volume where she praises Satan as the creator of womankind as well as the inspirer of feminine poetry and love between women. Americans are shocked when a twenty-year-old woman from Butte, Montana, writes a provocative autobiographical bestseller, in which she uses the Devil as a symbol of freedom from conservative social mores. In particular, she criticizes the oppression of women. Radical feminists in the United States and Europe collaborate on what they call *The Woman's Bible*. It eulogizes Eve's consumption of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, and Satan's function in the tale is claimed to be that of a benign Socratic mentor figure. Elsewhere, a distinguished American suffragette portrays Black Masses, supposedly celebrated by medieval witches, as an act of feminist insubordination towards God, his priests, and the worldly lords who have all denied the rights of women. In a critically well-received and commercially successful novel by a young Englishwoman, a kindly Satan helps the female protagonist achieve self-actualization and autonomy from her male relatives. An incredibly wealthy Italian marchioness, a world-famous stage actress,

and an illustrious silent film star play identity games that involve taking on the role of Satan or portraying themselves as being in league with this entity. Numerous Parisian women adorn themselves with jewellery sensuously depicting Eve's collusion with the Devil and her partaking of the forbidden fruit. *How are we to understand these texts, practises and artefacts?*

FROM MISOGYNY TO SUBVERSION: SATANIC FEMINISM

The notion of women as especially receptive to Satan's guiles is very old and quite prominent throughout much of Christianity's history. This idea has often derived its authority from Genesis 3, which shows Eve to be the first one to succumb to the serpent's temptation. Outside the realm of religion, it frequently appeared in fiction, art, and anti-feminist polemics during the nineteenth century. This time period also witnessed the emergence of a very different approach to the theme. Some women (and the occasional man), typically influenced by the Romantics' transformation of Satan into a hero, now performed counter-readings of Christian misogynist traditions. Hereby, Lucifer became reconceptualized as a feminist liberator of womankind. In these counter-myths, he is seen as an ally in the struggle against a patriarchy supported by God the Father and his male priests. Eve's ingestion of the forbidden fruit becomes a heroic act of rebellion against the tyranny of God and Adam. This closely parallels how socialists like Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) used Satan's battle with God as a symbol of their fight against a capitalist and monarchist society (God being the ultimate monarch). Many left-wing thinkers felt that Christianity was a pillar of this social order. Historically, the figure of the Devil had functioned as a tool for patrolling social borders, since he symbolized lust, hedonism, pride, et cetera. Freethinkers, such as libertines or Romantic and Decadent writers, were naturally quite attracted to some of these supposed vices. Satan thus came to be employed by some as a titillating emblem of various "forbidden" pleasures and urges, alongside socialist use of the figure as the prototypical altruistic rebel. Satanic feminism, as I have chosen to designate the phenomenon that is the topic of my study, reflects this spectrum of radicalism and is, as we shall see, intertwined with prominent anticlerical, left-wing, artistic, and esoteric currents of its time.[2] In all these discourses, Satan was occasionally used as a positive symbol. There is also a misogynist counterpart to Satanic feminism, which I will call Demonized feminism, that

is, the explicit connection of female emancipation and the Devil by anti-feminists as a means to denigrate women's struggle for equality.[3] This phenomenon will also be scrutinized to some extent, as there exists a certain dialectic between these two simultaneously corresponding and opposing uses of the figure of Satan in relation to feminism.

With one notable exception, the individuals and groups that I write about did not self-identify as Satanists, nor did the lauding of Satan form a central component in a systematic worldview to which they adhered. Therefore, this study does not concern Satanism in a strict sense (more on this distinction later in this chapter), but Satanism employed as a discursive strategy in a delimited context. We should here bear in mind that there were, as far as we know, no Satanist organizations prior to the late 1920s, and no individual that could reasonably be labelled a Satanist *sensu stricto* until the 1890s, when a sole figure—somewhat famous in his time, but forgotten today—appeared. Moreover, the system he created was of a philosophical and semi-atheistic rather than a religious or esoteric nature. An esoteric set of beliefs centred entirely on Satan arose only in 1906, and once again it was an obscure and marginal phenomenon.[4] In contrast, nineteenth-century Satanism *sensu lato*—the aforementioned discursive strategy, which appeared in esotericism, literature, left-wing politics, and art—was articulated by individuals that occupy a more or less centre-stage position in Western cultural history: Blake and Bakunin, Blavatsky and Byron, Percy Shelley, Proudhon … and a number of feminists, some of them highly influential, whom we will become acquainted with in the present study. Therefore, furthering our understanding of this type of Satanism, which functioned at the time as a shorthand for a cluster of standpoints in opposition to Christian conservative social mores in general as well as to patriarchy, enables us to better comprehend key figures and currents in our cultural history. It will also tell us some interesting things about the renegotiation of the signification of beings from religious myth in times of secularization, when traditional institutionalized religiosity was being questioned.

PURPOSE, DEMARCATIONS, AND MATERIAL

The overarching purpose of this study is to map, contextualize, and discuss the discourse of more or less explicit Satanic feminism as it is expressed in a number of esoteric works (primarily by Theosophists), literary texts,

autobiographies, scholarly (or in some cases pseudo-scholarly) books, political and polemical publications (books, pamphlets, and periodicals), newspaper reviews, editorials and articles, early works of cinema, paintings, sculptures, and even artefacts of consumer culture such as jewellery.

Several questions will be posed to this material. What motifs are recurrent? What types of individuals usually expressed these ideas—what was their social class, level of education, temperament, and political orientation? What was the typical readership of the texts and how were they received (where such data is available to us)? What hermeneutical strategies are employed in counter-readings of the Bible or subversion of misogynist motifs? How far is the inversion of Christian myth taken? Which aspects of using Satan as a paragon of feminism appear to be problematic, and how do the figures in question deal with this? What are the transitory stages and grey areas between Demonized feminism and Satanic feminism? Moreover, all the examples of Satanic feminism will be situated in the context of the more general use of Satan as a positive symbol in political and esoteric thought at the time, in order to delineate which of these diabolically tinged currents frequently influenced the Satanic feminists (and vice versa, at times).

The time period under scrutiny stretches from 1772 (when the earliest relevant source text is published) to the years before World War II, a period of more than 150 years. Most of the study, however, focuses on what historian Eric Hobsbawm famously designated the "long nineteenth century", 1776–1914, a period that he claimed had sufficient continuity and consistency to be studied as a unity of sorts.[5] The great majority of sources belong to an even shorter time span, ca. 1880–1910, when Satanic feminism is most visible.

As we will see, for the purposes of this analysis, nineteenth-century Western European and (to some extent) North American culture is sufficiently coherent to similarly treat as a unity in some sense. The studied theme can likely be found in most countries in this territory, and although there are regional variations, too strong demarcations along national borders (which were, of course, repeatedly redrawn throughout the century) would become artificial and might obscure the intense cultural exchange continually taking place. This is primarily a study of phenomena observable in the educated classes, and a solid schooling in languages was *de rigueur* in these strata of society. The English and American upper and middle class could thus frequently read French books in the original language, and some proficiency

in German was not uncommon either. Their French equivalents were quite often able to read English (even if they were conventionally better trained in Latin), and so on.[6] Cultural influences flowed freely for other reasons as well, one being that intellectuals and artists were routinely educated abroad or worked abroad for periods of time. Additionally, the enormous increase of mass media such as newspapers and journals in the nineteenth century enabled ideas and impulses to travel even faster than what was possible with books. Finally, there were many formal and informal international networks that tied together the individuals studied here. Three examples are the Theosophical Society, the women's suffrage movement, and the Decadent movement.[7] As one would expect, the currents that I analyse seem to have been most prominent in the cultural centres of the day: Paris, Berlin, Vienna, London, and, towards the end of the period, New York. Hence, English, French, and German language sources are the primary focus here, albeit with brief looks at other examples, for instance, from Scandinavia and Italy.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Since I am a historian of religion, some of my colleagues might ask how the analysis of literary texts, which constitute a significant portion of my source material, is relevant to our discipline, which usually focuses on texts produced by religious groups and thinkers. The short answer is that I am interested in the process whereby a sinister figure from Christian mythology, Satan, was renegotiated into something positive (specifically with feminist connotations) for certain people, and this took place primarily in literature (but also in other textual genres discussed here, like esoteric works, pseudo-historiographical scholarship, and political tracts). For this very simple reason, literature is an important source material to consult. Additionally, it is a category of texts whose (considerable) influence on religion and attitudes towards religion is understudied, and thus worth investigating closely. Scholars of religion are beginning to take a greater interest in the relationship between religion and fiction, though this research largely focuses on present-day material and tends to privilege mass-market entertainment.[8] My study differs in that it treats both "lowbrow" and "highbrow" literature, and of course by dealing with an earlier time period. These are less explored aspects of the religion–fiction intersection.[9]

The function of literature in the context investigated here is not only that of entertainment or high art, nor is it possible to reduce it to a mere reflection of its time. Authors do not merely write what is possible in their historical circumstances. They also enable new ways of thinking through what they publish, hollowing out new discursive spaces in their culture and accomplishing remarkable changes in it—writing the impossible, as it were. For example, the reshaping of the Devil starts in Romantic literature. Romanticism is on no account just an aesthetic product of, or reaction to, the Enlightenment critique of religion, but was, it could be argued, instrumental in breaking down the hegemony of Christianity. The heroification of Satan constituted an important part of a much broader cultural tendency to dislodge all biblical characters from the position fixed by centuries of tradition, and thus destabilizing the entire symbolic system of Christianity. Hence, Romantic Satanism and its successors (including atheist socialists attacking the influence of the church by employing a Satanic discourse) play a crucial part in the religious history of Western Europe.

The case of Satanic feminism demonstrates how various radical nineteenth-century discourses, expressed in a variety of genres, overlap and mingle in a struggle with conservative powers that the radicals felt were epitomized by Christianity. By anatomizing this, the present study sheds new light on how religion, politics, and art can never be fully separated, and how all three interact continuously.[10] It further highlights processes that are relevant to understand for anyone interested in the mechanics of how subordinated groups (such as women or people of colour) in a time of transition can transform motifs traditionally employed to vilify and denigrate them into something subversive and potentially empowering. The specific focus here is on how reversals (both esotericist and secular) of religious myth serve this function.

For scholars in the narrower field of Western esotericism, the study will provide some unexpected examples of interfaces between esotericism and the political realm, as well as the interdependence of esotericism and literature. It will also contribute significantly to understanding the intellectual history of Satanism, a religion whose early stages and proto-forms have not been investigated sufficiently.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

A key term in this book is *discourse*. Following Michel Foucault's popularization of the concept in the 1960s (of course, the word was in use long before this, both as a specialist term among academics and elsewhere) the amount of interpretations have exploded. Foucault himself admitted that he 'used and abused [it] in many different senses', which has hardly made his understanding of the notion easier to summarize succinctly. On the most general level, he says, 'it denoted a group of verbal performances' by which he 'meant that which was produced (perhaps all that was produced) by the groups of signs'. This was then refined to denote 'a group of acts of formulation, a series of sentences and propositions'. Even more specifically, he explains, '[D]iscourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence.'[11] This is still fairly abstract, and in order to better grasp how this ties in with the broader concerns in Foucault's work, we can turn to elucidations by later scholars. Richard Terdiman, drawing on Foucault, views discourses as 'the complexes of signs and practices which organize social existence and social reproduction'.[12] Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips delineate discourse as 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)'.[13] In other words, a discourse is a specific cluster (that will always have fuzzy edges and overlap with other clusters) of signification, with consequences for social (and in extension political) life. Teasing out these implications is an important aspect of the scholar's work. The cluster may be huge, like Prussian nationalism, or small, like Romantic Satanism. Identifying "a discourse", breaking out a portion of human culture to dissect, always implies the creation of an artificially demarcated unit—an act inevitably based on the scholar's own research interests. This does not mean that the identification is arbitrary, and it should of course be grounded in a certain coherence in the chosen material.[14] Discourse analysis will here entail sketching out the structure and content of such a cluster or complex, and contextualizing it using biographical data, information about the time and place it flourished, and, not least, related discourses. The label discourse itself, as used here, does not signal anything specific concerning the truth or falsehood of the ideas expressed in a given discourse.[15] Although my application of the term is ultimately derived from him, I do not adopt Foucault's overall approach wholesale, primarily because I find his

disinterest in individual social agents and the authors of texts less than congenial to my goals.[16]

My view of *gender* is informed by the commonly assumed position in contemporary gender studies: I hold gender largely to be a social construct, which is therefore fluid and highly dependent on the specific social context in which it is embedded. Naturally, this does not entail a categorical denial of the importance of the physical sex and biological functions. However, our perception of them should be understood as constantly mediated by discourses that are bound up with historically contingent power structures. The *discourses on gender*, which is what I as a scholar in the humanities have the competence to study (I will leave biology to the natural scientists), are therefore, in practice, anything but fixed and non-negotiable, regardless of the actual biological "facts". For example, it is a biological fact that fertile women menstruate, but the perception of this fact—say, as a punishment from God, a disgusting bodily function, a contributing factor to women being more intelligent than men, a cause of irrationality in women, or a thing worthy of ritual celebration—is discursively determined. In other words, I could be called a "soft realist", in that I, for instance, consider it possible for biologists to make statements about biology that are in some sense "factual" (though they will inevitably be coloured by the discourses they are embedded in). Using the tools of my own discipline, however, I see the biological level "itself" as unreachable, even in this mediated manner. What I am interested in, therefore, is the discourses on gender that can be found in the sources—aggressively patriarchal, radically feminist, and somewhere in-between. Since I do not presume to make normative statements about the truth claims made in said discourses, there is no need to contrast or support any aspect of them with a biological "reality".[17]

Satanic feminism will be approached as constituting a *tradition*, though the term is admittedly problematic. It should not be taken as a designation for something that has been personally and orally handed down in an unbroken line of transmission, or that forms the basis for (and is part of) the social practices of a clearly demarked group of people.[18] Here, it simply means that the ideas in question seldom arise *ex nihilo*, but tend to draw on earlier writers who have advanced similar speculations (of course, this also entails that they are part of the same discourse). Their successors may at times have produced comparable interpretations independently, but more frequently they probably had some awareness—which could often have been arrived at

indirectly, in a highly roundabout fashion—of earlier feminist musings on these matters. This makes it viable to trace certain developments chronologically, but bearing in mind that, as Antonio Gramsci puts it, '[t]he history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic'.[19]

Approaching my topic as a tradition, I will especially explore the fact that instances of Satanic feminism are generally embedded in religious or literary-artistic currents like Theosophy, Romanticism, Decadence, and the Gothic genre, which provide specific tropes concerning how the Devil can be conceptualized as woman's helper. This works on two levels. First, fixed motifs are drawn from older works (e.g. from Blavatsky's celebration of the Edenic serpent, discussed in chapter 4, or from the English Romantic Satanists' lauding of Satan as the ultimate individualist, delineated in chapter 3). Secondly, on a more structural level, techniques for strategic counter-readings of Christian mythology are borrowed from these predecessors. At times, these influences are explicitly acknowledged, and sometimes they are apparent only to the informed reader (be this person a present-day scholar or a contemporary of the historical figures). As mentioned, the influences were in some cases probably mediated and indirect. These themes and motifs were, so to speak, in the air at the time, and were disseminated in nebulous and circuitous ways. In spite of the difficulties with mapping the spread and evolution of notions and views, it is possible to sketch something coherent enough to be labelled a tradition. At times, this tradition is seemingly self-conscious, with straightforward references to predecessors, but it is more often—and this needs to be openly acknowledged—more of an analytical after-construct of mine to help comprehend a recurring theme and the motifs connected with it.

The *texts* (a term used in this study in the wide sense that can also include a painting, a silent film, or a piece of jewellery—all part of the discourse under scrutiny) are related not only through influences moving in different directions but also in the intertextual sense where the presence of certain texts will likely have affected reader-response to other texts. Intertextuality is a notoriously fuzzy concept. It was introduced by Julia Kristeva, who drew on concepts in Mikhail Bakhtin's work when she developed it. The term should not be understood as a different label for influence or allusion, but rather as denoting the fact that the meaning of a text arises in the meeting with a reader (not at the moment its author writes it) whose understanding of it will inevitably be coloured by a familiarity with other texts. Meaning thus

"appears" in the space between texts—the intertextual space.[20] As Foucault observes about books (and this applies to texts in the wide sense as well): 'The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network.'[21] For example, the well-known tropes of Romantic Satanism, with which most educated people at the fin-de-siècle would have been familiar, probably influenced the reception of some pieces of Satanic feminism. In order to understand one of the "nodes", to use Foucault's term, we must therefore consider how it relates to its network. In less mysterious terms, what I am referring to could also be called contextualization, which is a very basic approach in intellectual history, but here with special attention to reader-response.[22] For practical reasons, it will only ever be possible to highlight a small selection of the lines that intersect at the node, and different scholars will make different choices depending on their academic interests. This dimension is highly relevant but hard to work with, and where possible I have tried to consider reception history and how pre-formed (positive) understandings of the figure of Satan are echoed in it. In some cases, such as the chapter on Mary MacLane, the availability of excellent databases (combined with the help of kindly librarians and archivists) and earlier research has made this a fairly easy task, while in others (especially pertaining to France, where the material is much more complicated to access) it has been difficult. Usually, however (though there are exceptions, again especially when it comes to Mary MacLane), only the reactions of critics and established intellectuals are available to us. We can merely speculate on how others reacted to the writings of figures like Jules Michelet, Renée Vivien, or Sylvia Townsend Warner. Some such conjectures are provided throughout the present study, but there is a natural limit to how much can be stated about this matter.

In some types of literary studies, taking an interest in the biography of an author has been strongly questioned. This interest remains less suspect among historians of religion, but I shall nevertheless briefly explain why I consider it important and worthwhile.[23] In an article about Decadent literature, Alice R. Kaminsky states, '[I]t is clearly irrelevant to the discussion of a literary concept to involve ourselves in the question of how the various writers behaved, or what performances they put on for the sake of publicizing their

theories.'[24] My view is the complete opposite: these factors are extremely important to acknowledge in our analysis. In a sense, they constitute part of the texts themselves, which clearly, as Foucault points out (though he is less interested in the figure of the author than I am), do not end abruptly on the final page or begin on page one, but stand in a relation to its author and readers where there is a constant slippage in all directions. The texts are set in an intertextual prism where precisely those aspects that Kaminsky suggests we disregard are crucial to a proper understanding of how they came to be and how they were understood at the time of publication. The understanding of textual "content" (to the extent that there is such a thing as "raw" content in an absolute sense) is always determined by intertextual factors, for example, shaped by knowledge of the authorial figure. This applies equally to literary works and, for instance, esoteric writings where the authors are public figures. Such 'performances they put on for the sake of publicizing their theories' are also "texts" and should be read as such in close relation to the written works. For example, when most readers were aware that an author was an infamous libertine and rake this would naturally have dissuaded them from viewing his novel as a piece of moralistic and pious edification. Roland Barthes claimed in a famous 1968 essay that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'.[25] Yet, no matter how much we would like to depose him or her, the author is undead and inevitably comes back to haunt us—at the very least as an intertext determining the reception of works, but reasonably also if we are interested in how and why texts were written. If the social context of a work is important (and few historians of religion would deny this, even though a few extremist scholars of literature might) the author is clearly a dimension of this that we need to take into consideration.

Biography, then, is not only of interest as a factor in reception history. Knowing the social groups and types of individuals that generated these texts is, in fact, integral to our understanding of the Satanic feminist discourse. While it is perhaps unnecessary to speculate on detailed psychological motivations, for instance, on the basis of events in the authors' childhoods, it is naturally relevant to examine what social strata these ideas were produced in, what type of individuals were attracted to Satanism as a discursive strategy, and in what immediate social context they were located. Further, it is worth considering who subsequently read the text (and perhaps produced works of their own). As will become clear, there is definitely a pattern to

this. We can here note that Foucault states that a major difference between his own "archaeological" method and that of the history of ideas (as it stood in the late 1960s, when he was writing—today his theories have had a powerful impact on this discipline) is the latter's interest in the intentions of the authors of texts. Foucault's method, he says, does not, by contrast, attempt to 'restore what has been thought, wished, aimed at, experienced, desired by men in the very moment at which they expressed it in discourse'. The so-called archaeology of knowledge is no 'return to the innermost secret' but rather the 'systematic description of a discourse-object'.[26] Foucault has certainly not been alone in condemning a focus on authorial intent. Other scholars raising partly similar objections include Dominick LaCapra and, as mentioned, Roland Barthes.[27] As can be expected, given my embrace of analytical categories like reader-response and intertextuality, I agree with LaCapra's dismissal of the notion 'that authorial intentions fully control the meaning or functioning of texts'.[28]Even so, like him, I am willing to consider a thorough reconstruction of this intent, which we cannot expect to reach in a direct way, one of several dimensions of relevance if we want to understand a text as fully as possible.

Especially in his later "genealogical" phase, Foucault is known for his insistence that scholars should focus on the relationships of power inherent in discourses. To him, this emphatically does not mean considering how specific individuals are situated in power relations. Discourse analysis, in Foucault's sense, takes little interest in social actors, instead operating on a level of abstraction and impersonal social semiotics.[29] In a way, my own approach is a sort of compromise. I am both interested in the individuals producing the texts (again, I refer to texts in the widest possible sense) that constitute the discourses, as their biography and likely intentions have considerable explanatory value, and in systematic description and contextualization of discourses, with special attention given to questions of power and resistance.

PROTEST EXEGESIS, COUNTER-READINGS, AND COUNTER-DISCOURSES AS OBJECTS OF STUDY

As seen in the declaration of purpose, a main theme in my analysis is hermeneutical procedure in relation to the Bible, and especially disruptive and dissident modes of reading scripture. This study thus deals with what, in

the context of Gnostic studies, has been variously referred to as *protest exegesis* and *inverse exegesis*, or a 'hermeneutical principle … of revolt', a mode of interpretation in which the ostensible villains of scripture are exalted and the supposedly good figures condemned.[30] Literary theorist Harold Bloom has analysed Gnostic hermeneutics as an example of 'creative misunderstanding', a 'theory of misprision' where the text is 'misread' in a conscious and intentional way.[31] However, Michael Allen Williams has argued convincingly that such a strategy is not really characteristic of so-called Gnostic texts, which in fact are not as consistent in their supposed tactic of inversion as has been assumed, nor do they have "protest" as their ultimate purpose. The aim of the Gnostics (a label which Williams perceives as problematic) was rather to solve the problem of understanding biblical passages that have traditionally been considered troublesome and illogical even among the orthodox.[32] While the view of Gnostic hermeneutics that Williams critiques is probably indeed historically inaccurate, elements of the analytical terminology and interpretative suggestions that have arisen from this erroneous perception are rather well-suited to apply to the discourse of Satanic feminism.

Hans Jonas, one of the great pioneers of Gnostic studies, asserted the following about Gnostic usage of, for example, the biblical story of the eating of the forbidden fruit (there are several examples of Gnostics making the serpent a liberator figure):

> This opting for the 'other' side, for the traditionally infamous, is a heretical method, and much more serious than a merely sentimental siding with the underdog, let alone mere indulgence in speculative freedom. It is obvious that allegory … is here made to carry the bravado of non-conformity.[33]

This certainly holds true for Satanic feminism, where a reinterpretation of Satan, and especially his role in the Edenic myth, is utilized to display nonconformity with the traditional reading of the Bible where Eve's collusion with Satan is seen as a legitimation of the subjugation of all women. In my examples, it typically also ties in with a more general attitude of social dissent and radicalism. According to Kurt Rudolph, another major name in the field, Gnostic protest exegesis reflects the social protest of subaltern groups, to whom this mode of interpretation, in his opinion, can be traced.[34] This may or may not be so in the case of ancient Gnosticism, but it is true of my material, and we shall see that a strategic subversion and

reversal is applied in particular to the specific passage that underlies how Christian mythology has been used to advocate male supremacy: Genesis 3.

Protest exegesis, inverse exegesis, or the hermeneutical principle of revolt could also be called counter-reading. It is important to understand an approach like this as intensely relational and to highlight the tensions inherent in this relation. H. W. Fawkner rightly underscores that a counter-reading 'is at once outside the normative reading *and* inside it', and thus 'cannot replace the normative reading, substitute itself as transcendental signified'.[35] The typical purpose of a counter-reading is to destabilize, not to supersede. It does not, by definition, represent a new hegemony, but a form of discourse that is in some sense intentionally ephemeral and parasitic upon its antagonist: a *counter-discourse*.[36] The term *counter-discourse* has been borrowed from Richard Terdiman, who acquired it from Foucault. The former defines it as *discursive systems* projecting 'an alternative, liberating *newness* against the absorptive capacity of … established discourses'.[37] Those who propound such systems are 'driven by a *negative* passion, to displace and annihilate a dominant depiction of the world'.[38] Terdiman emphasizes how 'counter-discourses are always interlocked with the domination they contest', and this "conflicted intimacy" (essentially the same thing as the relational dimension) is something that will be given special attention throughout this study.[39] Here, the intimacy is with Christian mythology, which is appropriated, subverted, and (partly) inverted, but at the same time paradoxically preserved, perpetuated, and sustained. The reviser of mythology is to some extent trapped in the established structure, no matter how much it is sabotaged, condemned, and reconfigured. Inevitably, as we will see, inversion often entails a partial acceptance of the content of the Bible. This tension between acceptance and rejection, between conservation and subversion, is a central concern in my analysis of the source texts. As mentioned in the declaration of purpose, I am particularly interested in how far semantic inversions and counter-readings are taken. Seldom or never does Satanist discourse involve the simple switching of a set of postulated binary opposites, for example, Satan suddenly encompassing all the good things usually attributed to God, or, for that matter, all the evils typically seen as the hallmarks of Satan (such as lies and cruelty) being unconditionally accepted as good. The shifts and revisions are more subtle and complex.

Counter-discourses are to some extent present in all cultures, but they may be more visible and prominent at certain times. The late nineteenth century was such a time in European and North American culture. I hence share Terdiman's interest in 'mapping the multivocality' that characterizes a 'semiotic structure bathed in cultural stress'.[40] Received meanings are constantly in flux, of course, and even within the dominant discursive formations there are constantly developments, micro-conflicts, and inconsistencies. Yet, during the period that is the primary focus here, ca. 1880–1910, change was clearly uncommonly rapid and conflict-laden. Some very basic assumptions—for example about the origin of mankind and the status of the Bible as the actual word of God—were being shaken in their foundations. This made the whole system of signifiers and historically aggregated meanings unstable, and a figure like Satan, for instance, became a (more or less) floating signifier.[41] Thus disembedded, Satan could be invested with widely differing (but not arbitrary) meanings and utilized as a "positive" or "negative" sign on the semiotic battlefield of discursive struggle. This war of signification is ultimately, to quote Foucault, about 'relations of power, not relations of meaning'.[42] We can thus discern the fundamental struggles over control embodied even in seemingly less central counter-discourses like Satanic feminism. Hence, it is possible to learn important things about domination through hegemonic religious discourses, and methods historically used to subvert them, by studying this phenomenon.

MYTH AND COUNTER-MYTH

Having considered some approaches to *oppositional reworkings of myth*, it is high time to explain what I mean by the term *myth*. When I do not use the qualifier secular before it, I am referring to myth in a more narrow religious sense. The biblical scholar Tryggve Mettinger has proposed a series of characteristics (he shies away from seeing them as constituting a definition, but they work quite well as precisely that) typical of religious myth.[43] First, it 'is narrative in form'. Secondly, it deals 'with one or several gods and/or supernatural beings'.[44] Thirdly, it has one or more of the following functions: (a) to provide *entertainment*; (b) to serve as a *paradigm for the present*, as *validation* (legitimation) for institutions and values, and as an *explanation* for the burdens of human existence; and (c) to offer a *counter-present* that

relativizes the deficiencies of the prevailing situation.[45] I find this a convincing and useful characterization (or working definition) and will here adhere to Mettinger's formulation. The aspect that interests me most is the third one, especially sub-level b of it. After all, this is a study of how myth becomes a battleground for conflicting political values—more specifically: differing views on the rights of women. Sub-level b also relates to something Mettinger should perhaps have stressed more: the position of myth as especially authoritative due to a group's acceptance of its claims of conveying ultimate truths anchored in the supernatural realm. Although he highlights the societal functions of myth, Mettinger says nothing about belief in the gods present in the stories. While this may not be an absolute necessity, and belief as such is difficult to measure, mythical narratives are clearly not comparable to any random type of story. In the myth's social context, its supernatural elements are perceived in a manner radically different from those in, for example, the stories of the brothers Grimm or Bram Stoker.[46] It is primarily hereby that myth gains its ability to function as an especially powerful legitimation of social values.

Many scholars have remarked on the didactic, moralistic, and conservative function of myth; in short, how it is intimately connected to hegemonic power structures. In his classic study *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (1926), Malinowski says that its purpose 'is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events'. It is, he states, a 'by-product of … sociological status, which demands precedent; of moral rule, which requires sanction'.[47] As the title of his book indicates, Malinowski analyses small-scale traditional cultures, but his words hold equally true in modern industrialized countries, where myth also typically bolsters dominant social discourses. Religious myths, such as the Garden of Eden narrative, have been handed down for a long time in our culture and they (or rather, their traditional interpretations) have played precisely this legitimating role all along. As Susan Starr Sered (among many others) has discussed, this function also very much pertains to the status of men and women in a society: 'Founding myths, creation myths, etiological myths all proclaim that the way "we" do gender is natural and sacred.'[48] She further explicates that

> the more agency women have, the more control they have over the creation and interpretation of symbols. … In some instances, the agency of women may grow strong enough to overpower the oppressive symbolic Woman, allowing the creation of gynocentric symbols, myths, and rituals that transform the image of Woman and that augment women's agency.[49]

The material to be considered in what follows appeared at a point in time when women's agency was indeed increasing in precisely this fashion, and thus they had the opportunity to challenge misogynist use of mythology. This did not mean the response was always an intra-religious one. Instead, it often came from individuals who had more or less already left Christianity (or at least its organized forms), and who wanted to persuade others of this religion's detrimental effects for women. In the case of the (in most instances) secularized counter-myths that I study, their creators—and a large portion of their target audience—were seldom convinced of the existence of, for example, Satan and God. The counter-myths, however, inevitably relate directly to narratives of the supernatural that others, the ideological opponents, view to a considerable degree as factual. They are thus, in a sense, never cut loose from the special ontological category of the supernatural or divine (the similarity to the earlier discussion of the parasitic and relational nature of counter-discourses will be apparent here).

The term *supernatural* itself can potentially be seen as problematic. In his lengthy discussion of myth in *Draksjukan* (2007), the Swedish historian of religions Stefan Arvidsson has suggested that the supernatural can be defined simply as that which natural science says is not natural (perhaps it would be better to say that which the natural sciences admit they have no explanation for). Arvidsson argues that this is an acceptable division because modern rational reflection on religion arose at around the same time as the scientific revolution.[50] This is a useful approach at least for the time period I focus on, when natural science was beginning to distance itself from religion more explicitly. It thus fits well with emic modes of thinking on the issue.[51] Accordingly, since these emic understandings are tied to a specific time period, it follows that my use of the term should be understood as chosen in accordance with my material. I would be hesitant to employ this word in a definition with transhistorical claims, like Mettinger does.

To summarize, counter-myth serves the opposite function of "ordinary" myth, subverting instead of supporting dominant discourse on how the social order should be organized. Undermining the authority of hegemonic mythical narratives by presenting conflicting alternative versions is never an end unto

itself. Like counter-discourses in general, the counter-myth is always intended to cause some sort of social change, a shift in power structures (be they in a delimited context of religious institutions, or in the wider society which is affected by these institutions).[52] Of course, myth itself—not only that which is a counter-myth to an existing one—can have a liberating, radical function, as the influential historian of religions Bruce Lincoln has demonstrated. Lincoln has criticized the exclusively negative understanding of myth propounded by many more or less Marxist thinkers and emphasized the potential use of myth in resistance to hegemonic discourses.[53] This matter is closely tied to general concerns with how religion, as a broadly conceived phenomenon, relates to power, oppression, and liberation. In several works, Lincoln has insisted on the need to problematize notions of religion as serving 'only the interests of certain privileged strata, preserving their wealth, power, and position' by 'casting the material interests of the privileged or dominant into ideological form and presenting these as eternal truths'.[54] While religion has certainly often played this role, Lincoln says that it should be contrasted, for instance, with the European messianic, millenarian, and heretical movements that have challenged dominant power formations. Such examples show that it is impossible to reduce religion or myth to a tool of the ruling class.[55]

Following this line of argument, Lincoln has suggested a taxonomy partitioning religion into religions of the status quo, religions of resistance, and religions of revolution.[56] The first is easy enough to understand and furnishes a transcendent justification for the present social order and its preservation. Religions of resistance 'result from the inevitable failure of the religion of the status quo to permeate and persuade all segments of society', thus providing 'an inverse index of the ideological hegemony of the dominant fraction'.[57] It is in this manner we can understand, for example, the emergence of Theosophy in 1875. From the outset, this vigorously anticlerical movement very much positioned itself as an adversary of many core values of Victorian society, for example, by a rhetoric in its creed of universal brotherhood that rejected religiously motivated ethnocentrism and imperialism.[58] Religions of this kind, Lincoln explains, are characterized primarily 'by a negative feature: their refusal to accept the religion of the status quo in part or in toto'.[59] Leaders tend to belong to what Lincoln refers to as the "marginal intelligentsia", which again fits well with Theosophy's

front figures, as well as many other of my key examples (female intellectuals, of course, being marginal almost by definition in the nineteenth century).[60] The last of his three categories, religions of revolution, unlike the religions of resistance, 'define themselves in opposition to the dominant social fraction itself, not its religious arm alone, promoting direct action'.[61]

The majority of the figures under scrutiny in the present study were not members of an organized religion, however (some might even hesitate to label Theosophy thus). So, how will Lincoln's taxonomy be useful? It can, I would suggest, equally well be applied to different varieties of myth, dividing them into myths of the status quo, myths of resistance, and myths of revolution.[62] Even when we are not dealing with a religious system of thought, or a religious organization, we can analyse, for example, the counter-myth of Eve as a heroine and Satan as her benevolent helper as a myth of resistance, in opposition to the status quo myth where the same basic narrative is framed as a (religious) justification for the subjugation of woman. A myth of revolution would be one where actual, and potentially violent, revolt is propagated (we will see some instances of this, primarily in the section on socialist use of the figure of Satan). Elsewhere, Lincoln approaches discourse in a similar way (though with a different taxonomy). He describes his view of it as follows:

> In the hands of elites and of those professionals who serve them (either in mediated fashion or directly), discourse of all forms—not only verbal, but also the symbolic discourses of spectacle, gesture, costume, edifice, icon, musical performance, and the like—may be strategically employed to mystify the inevitable inequities of any social order and to win the consent of those over whom power is exercised, thereby obviating the need for the direct coercive use of force and transforming simple power into 'legitimate' authority. Yet discourse can also serve members of subordinate classes (as Antonio Gramsci above all recognized) in their attempts to demystify, delegitimate, and deconstruct the established norms, institutions, and discourses that play a role in constructing their subordination.[63]

This delineation matches Lincoln's conception of myth. His understanding of this term is partly inspired by Roland Barthes, and he sees myth as a sub-category or specific form of discourse that can be summarized simply as 'ideology in narrative form'.[64] This appears rather too broad to me. I will, as mentioned, instead use the definition derived from Mettinger that I have already described, where the "supernatural" or divine is seen as a key feature of the category in question, and with varieties in which this feature is not present instead being designated secular myths. However, even if I do not

subscribe to his definition, Lincoln has interesting things to say about negotiations of power in relation to myth. He postulates three typical approaches for subaltern groups who wish to overthrow the status quo using myth as their tool. First, the authority and legitimacy of the mythology supporting the present social order can be called into question, which would 'deprive it of the capacity to continually reconstruct accustomed social forms'. Secondly, a narrative of a different type (fable, legend, history) can be turned into a new mythology to replace the existing one, by investing it 'with authority and credibility'. Thirdly, new interpretations of the hegemonic myth can be introduced, which can 'change the nature of the sentiments (and the society) it evokes'.[65] Lincoln also observes that these approaches can, of course, be combined. That is what we typically see in the material at hand, where the first and third varieties on his list tend to appear in tandem as a form of secularized counter-myth, whose primary functions is to destabilize the truth claims of Christianity along with the patriarchal interpretive tradition of Christian myth. Regarding the latter (that is, hegemonic religious discourse), Lincoln points out that

> [a]lthough religious discourse offers opportunities for advancing infinitely varied political positions, the self-interest of religious institutions and the ways these articulate with those of privileged social strata ensure that myths, rituals, dogmas, etc., that protect the status quo and advance the interests of elites will enjoy most authority and circulate most widely.

What will be studied here, in contrast, is the opposite of these dominant myths, discourses, and religions—the marginalized voices of resistance, the counter-discourses and counter-myths, which had limited circulation (relatively speaking—many of my source texts were in fact bestsellers, though this still did not mean they held anywhere near the authoritative status that, say, Protestant Christianity did among Anglo-Americans or Catholicism held in Italy).

COUNTER-READING AS A STRATEGY IN PRESENT-DAY SCHOLARSHIP

We will now turn to a troublesome aspect of previous scholarship on the topic of Satanic feminism.[66] When consulting the work of certain academics, a delicate problem arises: their analytical perspective resembles the standpoints and tactics seen in the Satanic feminist sources. This does not pertain primarily to close readings of the fairly explicit examples of Satanic

feminism that I focus on here (which most of these scholars seem unaware of), but to academic treatments of texts that I would be very hesitant to actually consider expressions of Satanic feminism. In some cases, these highly politicized professors even interpret, or rather counter-read, clearly patriarchal, misogynist works (that they too agree have this attitude) as subversive manifestos.

This tendency first arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a number of prominent feminist scholars of literature became fascinated with Romantic Satanism, and seemingly adapted its way of reading texts to academic discourse. They then proceeded to interpret the villains of older fiction as rebel heroes defying patriarchy and oppressive societal rules, in the same manner the Romantics did with Milton's Satan. This can be found, for example, in the works of Nina Auerbach—an American professor of English and Comparative Literature—who turns Dracula and other vampires into allies of feminism.[67] As just mentioned, Romantic Satanism was based on an interpretation of the Miltonic Lucifer as a hero, and there are instances where feminist scholars themselves return to Milton and apply their own combination of Romantic Satanism and late-modern ideologies of women's liberation. The trendsetter here was Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, published by Yale University Press in 1979 and a perennial title on the reading lists for a variety of gender-focused university courses worldwide. An important and brilliant work in many ways, it also has some rather awkward features. In Gilbert and Gubar's reading of Milton, Satan and Eve share a preoccupation with equality, and both stand to gain from a rebellion against the hierarchical structure epitomized by God the Father and Adam the Husband. This interpretation of *Paradise Lost*, they further claim, was widespread among nineteenth-century woman authors.[68]

Their book set the tone for much subsequent feminist scholarship, and I will freely admit that it also influenced me at a crucial early stage. Gilbert and Gubar state that 'the connections between Satan, Romanticism, and concealed or incipient feminism are intricate and far-reaching indeed'.[69] Reading these words was in fact one of the impulses that made me choose the topic of this study, and, as we will see, their basic assertion is indeed accurate. However, I was immediately dissatisfied with the examples of "Satanic feminists" in the nineteenth century that Gilbert and Gubar actually

provide in their book. Often, the readings seem forced and lacking in context, with explicit Satanic references frequently absent and in need of being teased out through far-fetched allegoric readings. For example, they see Mary Wollstonecraft's dismissive words about the sentimental motif of the unfallen Adam and Eve—'I have with conscious dignity, or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublimer subjects'—as reinforcing 'the revolutionary fervor that Satan the visionary poet … defined for women and Romantics alike'.[70] Certainly, this is making a fallen angel out of a lone feather, as there is otherwise no sympathy for the Devil to be found in Wollstonecraft's writings (I will nevertheless discuss this passage in more detail in chapter 3). In order to make their point, the authors seem to favour the technique of taking a single line out of context, as when they quote Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's (1861–1907) dramatic phrasing 'no friend in God—in Satan's host no foes'.[71] In fact, the complete stanza of the poem in question ('Doubt', 1896) reads: 'Then did I weep, compassionate of those / Who see no friend in God—in Satan's host no foes'.[72] Coleridge, in other words, does not align herself with Satan, but feels sorry for those unable to discern who is their true friend (God).[73] Gilbert and Gubar make many sweeping statements, but expend little energy on substantiating them.[74] The present study proves their basic argument to be quite correct, but presents the explicit textual evidence that they fail to provide.

Writing in 1981, Nina Auerbach states, 'As feminist criticism gains authority … its new sense of power has resulted in an impulse toward rather than a denial of mythology.' She brings up Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* as an instance of a work coming from this direction, which 'ends half in love with its antagonist's images, weaving them into a rhapsodic and sibylline myth of its own'.[75] Here, then, we face a scholarly counter-myth. Interestingly, Auerbach herself is to some extent an example of this same tendency, especially in her 1995 book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (more on this in chapter 5).[76] Adriana Craciun, another scholar of English literature, builds on the work by Gilbert and Gubar in her excellent 2003 article 'Romantic Satanism and the Rise of Nineteenth-Century Women's Poetry', but has a more nuanced approach that is much better grounded in historical context and empirical examples. However, Craciun too does not really provide any examples of historical women writers explicitly declaring their sympathy for Satan. I do find her readings persuasive, but the women in

question seem to have worked exclusively with a "coded" language where their heroines are tied to Milton's Satan in rather indirect ways, for example by (at times very faintly) echoing speeches by Satan, or through references to falling stars.[77] Even here I sometimes, but far from always, get the impression that the parallels are primarily something Craciun identifies and were in fact not perceived at all by the authors she analyses, or their contemporaries. Craciun repeatedly employs terms like *feminist romantic Satanism, feminist Satanism*, and *Satanic feminism*, which to me seem a bit strong to use as labels when the Satanic content of the material is so uncertain and arguable.[78] As in the case of Gilbert and Gubar, something is being described here that was indeed present among early feminists, but I would claim that my study provides more overt, and less subjective, examples of the tradition of Satanic feminism, albeit focusing on the latter half of the nineteenth century instead of its first decades like Craciun does. To some extent, her examples can perhaps be seen as having laid the foundations for later developments in that century, by making subtle feminist references to a glorified Satan in allegorical portrayals where the figure is never named as such.

The approach of Gilbert and Gubar (and, to a lesser extent, Craciun and Auerbach) is, as already mentioned, far from new. Readers with a strong desire to subvert hegemonic power structures have perceived Milton's Satan as a hero for more than 200 years, and, as we will see, these readers from an early stage include people who appreciate Lucifer from a feminist perspective. The unique thing about Gilbert, Gubar, Craciun, Auerbach, and others is that they are operating within a scholarly context, but even so occasionally tend to blur the line between their own feminist sympathies for the Devil and what can be found stated—explicitly or even reasonably implicitly—in Milton's writings, texts by nineteenth-century women authors, or other works they are analysing. For this reason, I consider especially Gilbert and Gubar to be situated in an ambiguous space somewhere between scholarship and interesting source material for research on what we might call scholarly Satanic feminism. Their writings are equally a propagation of Satanic feminism and a critical analysis of such themes. Since my focus here is on the pre–World War II period, I will, nevertheless, engage with them primarily in their capacity as scholars.[79]

Lesbian literary theory has also come to develop methods for subversive readings of literary texts. Again, this is not as new as some of its propagators

believe, but rather seems like an echo of Romantic and Decadent hermeneutics. These scholars propose a strategic reading between the lines, aiming to, as Sally Munt puts it, inhabit 'the text of dominant heterosexuality' and 'undo it, undermine it, and construct our own destabilizing readings'.[80] Bonnie Zimmerman similarly argues for "perverse readings", which appropriate a diverse range of texts for the lesbian cause.[81] In other words, such theory promotes subjective counter-readings and identifies lesbian subtexts in the most unlikely places. By now, my own attitude to such scholarship should be quite clear to the reader. I consider endeavours to rewrite patriarchal or heterosexist mythologies and stories a fully reasonable task for feminist or lesbian activists that are, for example, authors of fiction, artists or producers of ideology within new (or, for that matter, old) religious movements. I am more reluctant to see it as an appropriate part of a scholar's mission. Performing a self-described "perverse" reading of a source text in order to make it fit one's ideals is a breach with sound hermeneutical methods that will not add any knowledge of use for scholars.[82]

In contrast, the aspect of Gilbert and Gubar's project that aims to identify thematic traditions among female authors marginalized by earlier patriarchal criticism brings something of real value to the table. So does research focusing on the subjugation of women, in the past and now, which attempts to show mechanisms of repression and resistance. The important thing is always to respect the integrity of the sources and resist any temptation to remake that which one finds displeasing. A scholar must naturally never intentionally misrepresent and distort (not even if doing so openly whilst cheerfully arguing for "perverse" readings) the content of the source material in order to make it a tool for political struggle. When it comes to source texts, the scholar's task is to contextualize them, attempting to understand the intellectual and social environment in which they were created as well as their subsequent influence, and to interpret them as carefully as possible while always remaining aware and reflective of the type of meaning that the analysis aims to uncover. In our role as scholars, we must not actively reshape the sources, lest we ourselves should simply become producers of new source material.

SOME REMARKS ON SPELLING, TRANSLATIONS, AND TERMINOLOGY

The names of religious groups and currents are capitalized even when referring to less-established varieties, including Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and Satanism, as I see no reason to treat them differently in this respect from Christianity, Islam, and so on. Further, capitalization serves the useful purpose of distinguishing, for instance, Theosophy as (more or less) an organized religious movement (founded in 1875) from theosophy as a general concept (which has been present since antiquity). Literary movements—like Romanticism and Decadence—are also capitalized, which is similarly practical for differentiating, say, the self-identified Decadent current in literature from general notions of the decadence of humanity that were in circulation at the turn of the century. Political currents—socialism, anarchism, and so on—are not capitalized, nor is feminism.

Bible quotations are from the 1769 King James Version (KJV), since this was the most commonly used English translation during most of the studied time period.[83] All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own. When using existing translations, I have more often than not adjusted them (at times quite heavily) to more closely follow the original. These changes have been implemented without further comment. In translating poetry, I have attempted as precise as possible a literal rendering, without any ambition to retain rhyming, meter, or to convey the aesthetic qualities of the original poems. The original of any text quoted is always given in the notes.[84]

The term *feminism* will be employed in a fairly broad sense throughout this study, following how several historians of feminism have also chosen to be inclusive in their usage of it.[85] I use it to denote the view that women are oppressed by men and that equality of the sexes (or, in some rare cases discussed, female supremacy) is desirable and worth working towards.[86] Aside from this, basic assumptions about gender could differ radically between various forms of nineteenth-century feminism, for example, when it came to views of male and female as natural or constructed categories.[87] Theosophical feminists, for instance, often saw mankind as primarily androgynous spirits contained in physical bodies that are unimportant shells. Many secular feminists considered childbearing, childrearing, and certain domestic activities to be inherently feminine but—in opposition to how these endeavours were valued by society—as important and noble as typically male activities.[88] Unlike, for instance, suffrage campaigners, several of the figures discussed here are not collectivist in orientation, instead opting for a

radically individualist form of feminism, where it is only the female individual, or an elite of women, who is to break free from the constraints of patriarchy. The right to vote in elections may or may not be an important part of this striving. Another individualist variety, which could be found in certain anarchist contexts, was openly sceptical of suffrage struggles, since voting in democratic elections was considered a ratification of the state, which anarchists believed should be abolished.[89] In accordance with my usage of the word in the present study, such variations will not disqualify anyone from being a feminist.[90] Whatever the reasons for this individualist stance, it always presupposed an acknowledgement and critique of the existence of patriarchal structures affecting all women, even if this was felt to be something one could not, or was not obliged to, actively attempt to immediately change for everyone.

The word *feminism* (and its cognate words in other languages: *féminisme* in French, *Feminismus* in German) was not in wide use until the 1890s. The first documented use of it was in French and dates back to the 1870s. In 1882, the French suffragette Hubertine Auclert (1848–1914) started employing the term as a self-description in the periodical she published, and in 1892 a congress was organized in Paris under this heading. By the mid-1890s, the word had become established in Great Britain and within a few years it spread to the German, Russian, Spanish, and Italian languages. In the United States, it did not become common until the 1910s.[91] Since it was only in use during the final decades of the period my study covers, I apply the term here as an analytical (etic) category, which does not reflect the language used in most of the primary sources.[92] At times, I will use more specific contemporary or local labels, like, for example, "suffragette" for Anglophone feminists focused on gaining the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

As Naila Kabeer observes regarding use of the word *empowerment* (and I believe this pertains equally to the term *feminism*), 'there is a danger that analysts opt for those meanings which most favour their own values regarding what constitutes appropriate choices for women.'[93] This danger is especially acute when dealing with historical material, and we must, for example, remember that most nineteenth-century women who struggled for more power for their sex were biological essentialists. Thus, their unreserved romanticization of motherhood, for instance, may strike us as questionable today. A scholarly study, however, is decidedly not the place to

express such hesitations. As mentioned, we can also find elitist, individualist, non-collectivist figures that still perform what must be said to be an explicitly feminist analysis of gender relations. A stance like this is also likely to ruffle the feathers of many present-day feminists. Whatever our preferred form of feminism here at the start of the twenty-first century happens to be, we should be careful not to project this predilection back in time.[94] I will therefore not make any anachronistic normative pronouncements on whether historical figures were "really" feminists according to a particular present-day understanding of the term, or on how "successful" the material analysed here was for empowering women.[95] Instead, I will focus on what the mechanics and strategies were, and how they tied in with contemporary feminist discourses and the context in which the material appeared, rather than attempt to measure its success or lack thereof by any presentist standard.

Satanism is used as a label in two ways: *sensu stricto* and *sensu lato*. The former variety refers to what I have defined in an earlier book as 'a system in which Satan is celebrated in a prominent position'.[96] Of course, the term *Satan* is here interchangeable with the Devil, Lucifer, and other names that have been commonly used to designate the principle of evil in a Christian context (a figure which most Satanists perceive quite differently, as more or less benevolent or helpful).[97] A "prominent position" signifies that Satan is the only or the foremost among the gods, entities, or symbols revered. If this is not the case, the group or individual in question may still hold certain views that constitute a form of Satanism, but their ideology as a whole cannot be defined thus. The term *system* may designate anything from very simple constructs to highly sophisticated doctrines. This may seem a somewhat arbitrary dimension of my definition, but I deem it necessary in order to be able to exclude, for example, a person who lauds Lucifer in a single poem. Such an act does not make anyone a Satanist in the strict sense, any more than composing a single piece in praise of Christ would make a person a Christian. Only one figure in this study, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, really fits this more rigid definition. Satanism *sensu lato* entails celebrations of the Devil used as a discursive strategy in a fairly demarcated and restricted manner. Examples include socialists employing Lucifer as a symbol of revolution, feminists eulogizing him as an anti-patriarchal figure, and different varieties of purely literary veneration of Satan. These individuals and groups did not construct entire worldviews centred on Satan as the single

most prominent symbol, even if they may have made quite prominent use of him. *Sensu lato*, then, is the norm here, and I will explicitly mark when the other variety is being referred to by specifying it as *sensu stricto*. Otherwise it can be assumed I am referring to Satanism *sensu lato*. The word *Satanic* is used to designate explicit pro-Satan sentiments in a group, individual or text, rather than just something more generally demonic.

Many *names of the Devil* are utilized in the text, including Satan, Lucifer, and the Prince of Darkness. They are used synonymously here partly for stylistic reasons (to make the prose more varied) but also because they have traditionally mostly been seen as undifferentiated equivalents. At times in this enquiry, the need arises to distinguish these names from one another (e.g. some esotericists view Lucifer as a positive entity who is different from a negative Satan), but unless otherwise stated the names all refer to the same figure.

Two other words that will be used frequently in what follows are *esotericism* (which should here always be taken to mean *Western* esotericism, not a universal phenomenon) and *occultism*.[98] Especially the first term has been the subject of intense scholarly debate ever since the study of Western esotericism began to emerge as an internationally acknowledged field of academic inquiry in the early 1990s. Although there is disagreement over how to define or approach esotericism, we should note that nearly all scholars fully agree on certain classic examples belonging to this category.[99] Such examples include alchemy, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophy. During the 1990s, the field was dominated by the definition devised by Sorbonne professor Antoine Faivre. He conceived of esotericism as 'a form of thought', distinguished by a set of four primary and two secondary characteristics.[100] Later, more fluid and open delineations suggested by Wouter Hanegraaff and Kocku von Stuckrad, respectively, have become influential. Hanegraaff has reconsidered his views on the term several times. At first he was directly influenced by Faivre's formulation.[101] However, the position he has arrived at most recently is radically different from the one he presented at the start of his career. To summarize it in a very simplified manner, Hanegraaff now views esotericism as 'rejected knowledge', broadly conceived yet of a specific kind. This, then, is the wastebasket of hegemonic discourses such as those related to the Reformation and the Enlightenment. This is where that which, for some very distinct reasons, does not fit, is relegated. Since the reasons for something not being approved follow a

certain pattern, it is consequently not a random grouping of ideas that end up in this category. Rather than positing an ideal-typical esotericism, the attention is here turned to polemic against a certain type of knowledge (or rather, perhaps, knowledge claims) and view of the world.[102] Stuckrad instead conceptualizes esotericism as a discourse where a central position is occupied by rhetoric of secrecy pertaining to higher knowledge and the means by which it can be reached.[103] Hanegraaff and Faivre have both argued against actual secrecy as a requisite for something to be considered esoteric, as much of the material has intentionally been widely disseminated.[104] While this is certainly true, I concur with Stuckrad that a rhetoric of secrecy (which may pertain less to the physical accessibility of the material than to what Stuckrad designates 'the dialectic of the hidden and revealed') is nonetheless almost always present in the discourses most scholars see as esoteric (in whatever sense they employ the word), even if the actual mode of circulation is anything but secretive.[105] In the present study, the term *esotericism* designates a set of discourses that share a strong rhetorical focus on secrecy and concealment in relation to a supposed higher knowledge (in Stuckrad's sense), and which represent a form of rejected knowledge at odds with hegemonic discourses (in Hanegraaff's sense).[106] In a way, the dimension of secrecy is directly related to the status of esotericism as rejected knowledge, as the self-understanding of esoteric thinkers tends to be that the "masses" are unable both to understand and appreciate their teachings, wherefore this wisdom is best kept to the enlightened elite.[107]

The term *occultism*, which is sometimes employed in everyday language as a synonym for esotericism, will be used to denote something narrower. In conformity with Hanegraaff, I view this as an etic term for 'attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a secular disenchanted world'.[108] Thus, the word designates how esotericism, and views of it, is affected by the complex processes of secularization, which were especially intense in the nineteenth century. A practical example might be how esotericists try to make their teachings somehow conform to the findings of natural science, or when a vocabulary is borrowed from such contexts to strengthen one's legitimacy. Here, we can commonly observe a rhetoric claiming that the supposed opposition between esotericism and science is false and will be, or already has been, conquered.[109] Occultism,

then, can be seen as a sub-category of esotericism. The modern versions of Spiritualism and Theosophy are typical examples of it, and Swedenborgianism and Mesmerism can be seen as precursors. As Hanegraaff puts it, 'occultism is the product of a syncretism between *magia* and science, correspondences and causality'.[110]

When analysing the sources, I distinguish between a *theme* and a *motif*, in accordance with the established conventions of narratology. A motif, as defined by Gerald Prince in the *Dictionary of Narratology*, is a 'minimal thematic unit' and 'should not be confused with a theme, which constitutes a more abstract and more general semantic unit manifested by or reconstructed from a set of motifs'.[111] A theme, in turn, is 'a semantic macrostructural category' that is 'extractable from … distinct … textual elements which (are taken to) illustrate it. The theme expresses the more general and abstract entities (ideas, thoughts, etc.) that a text or part thereof is (or may be considered to be) about.'[112] For example, Eve in intimate conversation with the serpent would be a motif, while the hubris he fans in her is a theme, an overarching and structuring feature of the narrative. I will here consider Satanic feminism a theme, which is expressed through a number of motifs, for example, the witch as a rebel against patriarchy or Eve as an anti-patriarchal heroine.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The chapters are thematically divided rather than chronologically arranged, focusing on, for example, a genre (like Gothic literature or Decadence) or a distinct motif (such as witches or Luciferian lesbianism).[113] Within each chapter, however, the discussion of the sources tends to follow a roughly chronological order. The geographical scope is consistently broad, and there are generally speaking no separate sections detailing the development of the genres and motifs in specific countries. The two final chapters break with the thematic principle of organization and are instead extended case studies of two particularly interesting examples of Satanic feminism. For a full chronological overview of the content of the chapters, the reader is advised to consult the first section of the concluding chapter 12.

[1] Husserl-Kapit 1975, p. 426.

[2] The term *Satanic feminism*—as a label for a historical phenomenon—is borrowed from Adriana Craciun, who applies it to texts by certain female Romantic authors (Craciun 2003b, p. 707). It had earlier been introduced into the discourse of present-day Satanism by Blanche Barton in her essay 'Satanic Feminism' (published in the Church of Satan journal *The Black Flame* in 1997). On this essay and the ideas presented in it, see Faxneld 2013b, esp. p. 207.

[3] Hence the capital *D* in Demonized, to differentiate this phenomenon from demonization in a more general and less literal sense.

[4] The first documented Satanist organization (if that label is really appropriate for the group in question; the issue is far from clear-cut) was the German order Fraternitas Saturni, the first esoteric Satanic system was constructed by the Dane Ben Kadosh (Carl William Hansen, 1872–1936) and the "first Satanist" *sensu stricto* was Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927). A brief delineation of the early history of Satanism proper will be provided in chapter 2.

[5] Hobsbawm 1987, p. 8. The period has also sometimes been delimited as encompassing 1789–1914, with the French Revolution, rather than the establishment of the United States, as its starting point.

[6] On the occasionally lacking reading abilities of the French when it came to English and German, see Hemmings 1982, p. 102.

[7] Regarding the women's suffrage movement, Ellen Carol DuBois has, for example, described it as 'a self-consciously transnational popular political movement' (1991, p. 20). Cf. Kern 2001, p. 103.

[8] Examples of such studies include Duggan 2013, esp. pp. 95–96, 109–110; Cusack 2010; Davidsen 2013. I myself have also written several popular articles discussing contemporary popular culture and religion, mostly focusing on representations of religion (ranging from Haitian Vodou and Japanese folk religion to Satanism) in cinema and literature. See, e.g. Faxneld 2004c, 2004d, 2010b.

[9] Naturally, this is not to say that this is the first study of this kind, and there are several other important examples, but typically not written by historians of religion (e.g. Fyhr 2006; Hanson 1997). Especially close to my own topic is the excellent recent dissertation by Ruben van Luijk (2013).

[10] This notion can be related to Christopher Partridge's concept of *occulture*, which stresses the interrelatedness of (alternative) religion and popular culture (Partridge 2004). His analysis, however, does not have a strong focus on political implications. Partridge himself (at least at first) applied this term primarily to post–World War II developments (from the 1960s onwards), but it has since been used fruitfully by Nina Kokkinen as an analytical tool to further the understanding of nineteenth-century phenomena (Kokkinen 2013; on nineteenth-century occulture, see also Partridge's own remarks about its roots in this period in Partridge 2004, pp. 92–105). In a later publication, Partridge suggests the term could be broadened in scope even more (Partridge 2013). I am hesitant towards doing so, however, since I think the interesting thing about the concept is its ability to capture how various alternative worldviews become known to a wide audience through the rise of mass culture (and are simultaneously influenced by this culture). The latter, with its specific forms of media types, arises during the late nineteenth century. If we view the mass culture aspect as integral, as I think we should, it would hence not really be appropriate to talk of medieval occulture, as Partridge proposes in his 2013 article.

[11] Foucault 1969/1972, p. 107.

[12] Terdiman 1985, p. 54.

[13] Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 1 (cf. p. 13, where they define discourses as 'relatively rule-bound sets of statements which impose limits on what gives meaning'). Jørgensen and Phillips's minimal definition of discourse is intended to capture how the term is used by Foucault as well as, for example, Laclau & Mouffe and in discursive psychology.

[14] Cf. Foucault 1969/1972, p. 117. On small and large discourses, see Börjesson & Palmblad 2007, pp. 13–15.

[15] Cf. Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 14.

[16] E.g. Foucault 1969/1972, p. 55: '[D]iscourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject.' On this issue, see Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, pp. 16–17, 75–76, 90, 140–141. A discourse is the sum of a number of utterances, but this does not mean that the individuals uttering them are irrelevant to a better understanding of the broad picture. While individuals are indeed always situated in a social context that determines much, I think it important to acknowledge some level of individual agency (and idiosyncrasy) as well.

[17] Cf. Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2001, p. 108; Stuckrad 2003, pp. 263–264; Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, pp. 8–9. Using a word like *patriarchal* may seem like an adoption of the emic terminology of feminism (the word, in its current meaning, was coined in a proto-version as 'patriarchate' and 'patriarchism' by Matilda Joslyn Gage in 1893; see Gage 1893/1972, e.g. pp. 43, 246). It will, however, be employed with caution, and the texts I label thus will be obvious examples of the active denigration and denial of the political and private agency of women.

[18] This is a common understanding of the term in the social sciences (see Langlois 2001, pp. 15829–15833). Scholarship focused on texts, tends to define tradition differently (see e.g. Fyhr 2002, pp. 14, 22). For further discussion of tradition, see Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Lewis & Hammer 2007. On its role in contemporary Satanism, see Faxneld 2011c, 2013a, 2013c.

[19] Gramsci 1971, pp. 54–55. One could perhaps question if women, especially women belonging to the privileged strata of society (as most of my objects of study do), are really subaltern. However, Gramsci's point is valid in relation to them anyway: after all, these were voices challenging a rather crushing hegemony, and for this reason there were constant attempts to silence, delegitimize, and, more frequently, systematically ignore them. Hence, I am convinced that much more material of relevance to the history of Satanic feminism remains to be unearthed (material that might mend presently broken links). On women, feminism, and the category of the subaltern, cf. Young 1999a, p. 16.

[20] Kristeva 1980/1987, pp. 36–38, 85–86; Culler 1981, pp. 100–118. For a discussion of the genealogy of the term *intertextuality*, and how Kristeva's original usage has been disregarded by many of those who have employed it later, see Becker-Leckrone 2005, pp. 92–97. For a good introduction to some varieties of reader-response criticism, and the rejection of notions of an "objective text" in an absolute sense that they imply, see Tompkins 1980, pp. ix–xxvi.

[21] Foucault 1969/1972, p. 23.

[22] On contextualization as a core method in intellectual history, see e.g. Skinner 1969.

[23] Cf. Hanegraaff 2013, pp. 253–254.

[24] Kaminsky 1976, p. 371.

[25] Barthes 1977, p. 148.

[26] Foucault 1969/1972, pp. 139–140.

[27] Barthes 1977; LaCapra 1980, pp. 254–256. LaCapra's well-argued critical remarks target the focus on authorial intent in Quentin Skinner's work. The classical attack on the so-called intentional fallacy (considering the author's intention at the moment of writing the "explanation" the scholar should strive towards) is Wimsatt & Beardsley 1954, pp. 2–18.

[28] LaCapra 1980, p. 256.

[29] Cf. Bergström & Boréus 2005, p. 328.

[30] Pearson 1990, p. 37. *Protest exegesis* is Kurt Rudolph's term (1977/1987, p. 54); *inverse exegesis*, Ioan Coulianu's (1992, p. 121).

[31] Bloom 1975/1983, p. 62. Bloom even turns this into a general Gnostic rule, which, he claims, states 'that all reading, and all writing, constitute a kind of defensive warfare, that reading is mis-writing and writing is mis-reading' (p. 64).

[32] Williams 1996, pp. 57–60, 67. For a general discussion of Gnosticism as a historical phenomenon and how it is relevant to the present topic, see the next chapter. Williams suggests that the term *biblical demiurgical traditions* better reflects the actual content of the Gnostic sources and should therefore replace *Gnosticism* as their label (pp. 51–53).

[33] Jonas 1958/1992, p. 95.

[34] Rudolph 1977/1987, pp. 292–293.

[35] Fawkner 1990, p. 25.

[36] Terdiman 1985, pp. 68–69. I will use the term *counter-discourse* to designate Satanic feminism, but I will also talk of it simply as a discourse at times, when the point is not to specify its relation to a hegemonic discourse. Concerning the non-hegemonic nature of counter-discourses, one could perhaps argue that they do represent a new hegemony but of a highly limited kind, which its creators are aware will never be adopted by the majority of society.

[37] Ibid., p. 13. The term *counter-discourse* seems first to have been used by Foucault in a 1972 discussion with Gilles Deleuze (Foucault 1977, p. 209). Mario Moussa and Ron Scapp have explicated Foucault's term as designating when 'the formerly voiceless begin to speak a language of their own making' and 'have begun to resist the power seeking to oppress them' (1996, p. 89). Wright (2003) also utilizes the term.

[38] Terdiman 1985, p. 12.

[39] Ibid., p. 16.

[40] Ibid., p. 37. Terdiman's study deals with a selection of subversive avant-garde writers in France at this time, the only one of which I also discuss at any length being Baudelaire.

[41] For an excellent discussion of disembedding and floating signifiers in relation specifically to Satanism, see Petersen 2009, pp. 10–14.

[42] Foucault 1980, p. 114.

[43] Mettinger is my myth theoretician of choice for several reasons. For one thing, his view of the phenomenon takes into account the ideological-political dimension of myth in a manner congenial to my research goals. Moreover, it is also broad enough to encompass all the aspects of Christian tradition that I am interested in here, yet narrow and specific enough to exclude many other things that it would not be rewarding to place under this heading in my current study. For the latter reason, Roland Barthes's influential book *Mythologies* (1957) would, for example, not be useful here. We

can also note that Barthes, unlike most scholars of religion, does not define myth as necessarily being an actual narrative—an idiosyncratic perspective indeed.

[44] Mettinger 2007, pp. 68–69.

[45] Ibid., p. 69. Mettinger also mentions a fourth aspect, dealing with the context of myth, but asserts that although it was once believed that myths were necessarily tied up with ritual, this view has largely been abandoned. This final aspect is thus actually superfluous and does not have any relevance for the present study either.

[46] On myth's special form of authority, see Lincoln 1989, pp. 24–25; Arvidsson 2007, pp. 51–52, 65–67.

[47] Malinowski 1926, p. 125.

[48] Sered 2009, p. 10.

[49] Ibid., p. 12 (in Sered's terminology, Woman with a capital *W* signifies the symbolic construct, and women the actual human beings). Note, however, that the mere presence of "gynocentric" symbols does not necessarily entail an elevated status and freedom for women (cf. Faxneld 2013b). Sered seemingly wants to emphasize symbols, myths, and rituals specifically designed to empower women, not merely a strong focus on powerful mythological female figures as such.

[50] Arvidsson 2007, p. 61. We can further note that the division natural–supernatural (if not necessarily in the exact sense that was prevalent in the nineteenth century) would seem to have a longer history than Arvidsson suggests. In the theology of Western Christendom, for example, it goes all the way back to the ninth century. On this, see Saler 1977, pp. 36–48.

[51] However, Arvidsson's dichotomy between science and the supernatural is somewhat oversimplified, especially if we consider, for example, esotericists' appropriation of scientific terminology in this epoch. On this appropriation, see Hammer 2004, pp. 201–330; Asprem 2013.

[52] The counter-myth, then, stands in a binary, oppositional relation to hegemonic myth; it is not a mild nuancing of the latter (i.e., not an element in a tolerant, pluralistic multivocality) but a more or less thoroughgoing inversion of dominant discourse. Even so, this harshly oppositional stance may have as its long-term goal to achieve such a state of pluralism and relativism, where the truth claims of the presently dominating mythology are seen as no more authoritative than any other. The means used to achieve it is, however, a drastic inversion.

[53] Lincoln 1989, pp. 4–6, 175 (some examples of revolutionary use of myth on pp. 27–37). For further discussion of this view, see Friesen 2004, p. 283.

[54] Lincoln 2008, p. 77.

[55] Ibid., p. 79.

[56] There is also a fourth category, religions of the counter-revolution (an aggressively reactionary shape that a defeated religion of the status quo can assume), but Lincoln devotes little space to this category, and it is inconsequential for the present purpose. Ibid., p. 91.

[57] Ibid., pp. 79–82. Quotes on p. 82.

[58] There were certainly many ethnocentric and racist aspects of the Theosophical project (on this, see e.g. Kraft 2013, p. 365), in spite of the noble sentiments repeatedly expressed by its participants. Yet, although many of their words were fairly empty (or at least inconsistent), there is no doubt that some core statements seriously challenged many aspects of Victorian Christian, ethnocentric, and imperialist discourse. Theosophy will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

[59] Lincoln 2008, p. 83. Lincoln's list of examples of religions of resistance is surprisingly inclusive and features everything from Freemasons to Huguenots, Lollards and even Jews in Christian Europe, or Buddhists and Taoists in China.

[60] Ibid., p. 84.

[61] Ibid., p. 85.

[62] The latter two could be seen as sub-varieties of counter-myth.

[63] Lincoln 1989, pp. 4–5.

[64] Lincoln 1999, p. xii, italics removed. In an earlier book, Lincoln defines myth as 'that small class of stories that possess both credibility and *authority*', 'a discursive act through which actors evoke the sentiments out of which society is actively constructed' (1989, pp. 24–25). For Barthes's view of myth, see Barthes 1957.

[65] Lincoln 1989, p. 25. On how Lincoln defines fable, legend, and history, see p. 24.

[66] No monograph has been written on the subject earlier, only articles and chapters in broader studies. While there are plenty of studies of some of the individual figures and currents that I analyse, the scholars that will be discussed in this section are the only ones to identify Satanic feminism as a tradition.

[67] See note 76 below for examples of Auerbach's counter-readings.

[68] Gilbert & Gubar 1979, pp. 196, 202–204. Their reading of Milton is discussed further in chapter 2 of the present study.

[69] Ibid., p. 203.

[70] Ibid., p. 204; Wollstonecraft 1792/1986, p. 108.

[71] Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p. 206.

[72] Coleridge 1908, p. 40.

[73] They also mention the feminist and sex-radical newspaper *Lucifer the Light-bearer* (more on which in chapter 3), but only in passing (p. 205). In a later article, Gubar treats one of my most important examples, Renée Vivien (see chapter 8), but surprisingly does not really discuss how she used Satan as a positive symbol. Gubar 1984, p. 48.

[74] To give a typical example of such statements: '[N]ot only have feminism and Romantic radicalism been consciously associated in the minds of many women writers, Byronically (and Satanically) rebellious visionary politics have often been used by women as metaphorical disguises for sexual politics' (Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p. 205).

[75] Auerbach 1981, pp. 281–282.

[76] Some particularly clear examples of such readings can be found in Auerbach 1995, pp. 127–129, 137, 140–145. Another writer with partly similar tendencies is well-known cinema scholar Barbara Creed. In her analysis of the film *The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker, 1970), Creed claims that General Spielsdorf, the film's vampire hunter hero, is portrayed as a 'cold, cruel and puritanical figure in opposition to the values represented by the sensual, erotic, female vampire' and states that '[t]he film clearly contrasts the passionate sexuality of the women with the cold, withdrawn, repressed sexuality of the men' (1993, p. 60). This is a singularly subjective and value-laden reading, to say the least.

[77] Craciun 2003b, pp. 703, 709.

[78] Ibid., pp. 700, 707. Also pp. 710, 719.

[79] My intention is to later follow this book with a monograph that analyses present-day Satanic feminism (some preliminary findings from this project are presented in Faxneld & Petersen 2014a and Faxneld 2013b), chiefly in the esoteric milieu, where scholarly works of this kind have played an important part. This will give me reason to approach the texts of these feminist academics purely as source material. For further discussion of scholarly Satanic feminists, see Faxneld 2012b, esp. pp. 62–64, 67–68.

[80] Munt 1992, p. xxiii.

[81] Zimmerman 1993, p. 139.

[82] Like, for example, Katherine K. Young, I view contributions to scholarly debates as the primary purpose of academic research in the humanities on gender issues and take it to be 'distinct from feminist advocacy' (Young 1999b, p. 279, see also pp. 288–290 and Young 2002, pp. 33–35, for a critique of so-called engaged scholarship and attendant subjectivist tendencies). While I self-identify as a feminist and recognize that all studies will always have certain political implications, I think it important to at least strive towards divorcing my activities as a scholar from activist agendas supporting this or other causes. Young emphasizes that 'political analysis should always be based on good scholarship', and this is one way of looking at the political usefulness of scholarly work (Young 1999b, p. 293). However, we ought not to be deceived into believing that the inverse is also true: scholarly analysis need not be based on "good" political ideas to be of excellent quality. For a different perspective on this issue, cf. the enthusiastic attitude towards "transformative research" in Jones 2002 (pp. 67–70, 84–85). Jones argues that academics have an obligation to initiate social change (p. 85).

[83] The KJV was first published in 1611 and superseded in 1769 by the updated version of it known as the Oxford standard text. It is this version of the KJV that I have used here. Later, the British Revised Version (the New Testament published in 1881, the Old Testament in 1885), based on the KJV, became popular and influential (as did its American cousin of 1901), but the older text largely retained its dominance until the 1950s. Daniell 2003, pp. 697–698, 735, 739–740.

[84] Two peripheral sources quoted are unfortunate exceptions to this, where I have not been able to get hold of the originals. Moreover, another source was written in Finnish, which I am unable to read, wherefore I have not worked with the original.

[85] For example, Ellen Carol DuBois states that she uses it to mean 'a very large, long and complex tradition calling for the "equality", "elevation", or "emancipation" of women, but often disagreeing within itself as to how to achieve that'. 'In particular', DuBois writes, she uses it 'to describe a historical movement larger and more general than the demand for woman suffrage' (1991, p. 23).

[86] Cf. Young 1999a, p. 2, and Karen Offen's succinct attempt at a transhistorical definition: 'a comprehensive critical response to the deliberate and systematic subordination of women as a group by men as a group within a given cultural setting' (2000, p. 20; see also Offen 1988, esp. pp. 151–152, and the responses by Nancy F. Cott 1989 and Ellen Carol DuBois 1989, respectively). Offen argues that the word subordination is preferable to oppression, since the latter 'connotes a highly subjective psychological response' (2000, p. 20). I am not as inclined to immediately dismiss this subjective, individual dimension of feminist sentiments. As several scholars have pointed out, feminism is not 'a single category, with clear limits, fixed in a single semantic space' (Robbins 2000, pp. 3–4), and it can thus be seen as more appropriate to speak of *feminisms* as a plural noun (Young 1999a, p. 16). Such an understanding, which recognizes the vastly divergent ideologies underpinning the activities of different groups and individuals striving towards female emancipation in some sense, should be taken as implicit in this study, and in the broadly inclusive definition I have suggested.

[87] This issue could also be conceptualized as a long-standing intra-feminist conflict over whether men and women share a common nature (and, hence, common rights) or if women are radically different (for instance, having special domestic talents) but valuable and therefore worthy of equal rights and more access also to the public sphere. Farrell 1997, p. 151.

[88] On Theosophical feminists' ideas concerning our spirit as androgynous, see chapter 4.

[89] On anarchist feminism, see chapter 3.

[90] Young points out that '[l]ike Marxism … feminism *often* has a collectivist orientation' (1999a, p. 14, my italics). Implicitly, then, feminism is not by necessity collectivist in nature, even if it tends to be.

[91] Offen 2000, p. 19.

[92] As Kathi Kern points out, 'the history of "feminism" precedes the use of the term' (2001, p. 239).

[93] Kabeer 1999, p. 461.

[94] Similar critiques have been put forward concerning the study of women in other cultures. Saba Mahmood, for example, argues that when it comes to the liberatory goals of feminism we should 'not hold one particular model to be axiomatic as is often the case in progressivist narratives' (2001, p. 223).

[95] In the social sciences, specifically among those who study development aid, such attempts at explicit "grading" have been made, see e.g. Kabeer 1999.

[96] Faxneld 2006a, p. xiv: 'ett system där Satan hyllas i framskjuten position'.

[97] Ibid., pp. xiv–xv. For more on the discussion about definitions of Satanism (or, in Granholm's case, the uselessness of them), see e.g. van Luijk 2013, pp. 7–8, 11–12; Häll 2012, pp. 23–26; Granholm 2012, pp. 209–216, and my comments on the last-mentioned in Faxneld 2012d.

[98] The meaning of Western has, unsurprisingly, been the subject of some controversy (see e.g. the attack on the term's helpfulness in Granholm 2013 and the discussion in Asprem 2014). I use it here in accordance with Faivre's suggestion that Western culture is 'the vast Greco-Roman ensemble, both medieval and modern in which the Jewish and Christian religions have cohabited with Islam for several centuries' (Faivre 1994, p. 7).

[99] Cf. Stuckrad 2005a, p. 79.

[100] For Faivre's definition, see Faivre 1994, pp. 10–15. I have discussed this definition and some critiques of it in Faxneld 2010c, pp. 10–16.

[101] See e.g. Hanegraaff 1996, pp. 384–386.

[102] This approach is presented at length in Hanegraaff's book *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (2012a). Hanegraaff's position must not be misconstrued as a complete denial of esotericism as a historical phenomenon, and he emphasizes that even though Western esotericism 'is an imaginative construct in the minds of intellectuals and the wider public, not a straight-forward historical reality "out there" … it does refer to religious tendencies and worldviews that have a real existence' (2012a, p. 377). This existence, of course, is very much related to a dialectic between the perspectives of practitioners and opponents. In a recent book chapter, he offers the encapsulation that Western esotericism is the field that 'contains precisely everything that was consigned to the dustbin of history by Enlightenment ideologues and their intellectual heirs up to the present, because it was considered incompatible with normative concepts of religion, rationality, and science'. It is for this reason that it is not 'a random collection of discarded materials without any further connection', but rather a set of 'recognizable worldviews and approaches to knowledge that

have played an important although always controversial role in the history of Western culture' (Hanegraaff 2012b, p. 127).

[103] Stuckrad 2005b, pp. 88–91. Stuckrad further lists certain ideas that are typical of esotericism, i.e. the individual nature of the path to higher knowledge, an appeal to tradition as a category above institutionalized religion, and, finally, an emphasis on mediation and individual experience as key factors in the attainment of higher knowledge. A worldview based on ontological monism is also a recurrent trait (pp. 91–93). Another key point for Stuckrad is that esotericism should not be seen 'as a selection of historical "currents", however defined, but as a structural element of Western culture' (p. 80).

[104] Hanegraaff 1996, p. 485; Faivre 1994, p. 5. For a scathing critique of Stuckrad's 2005 book *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*, which (e.g. on pp. 10–11) presents an argument close to that in his article from the same year, see Hanegraaff 2013, pp. 180–183.

[105] Stuckrad 2005, p. 10, italics removed.

[106] As Bernd-Christian Otto (2013, pp. 233–237) has quite convincingly argued, Hanegraaff and Stuckrad (Otto refers to a later work by Stuckrad from 2010, but his points almost equally much pertain to a comparison between Hanegraaff's recent publications and the former's 2005 article and book as well) are not as far removed from one another as they themselves at times claim (due to an ongoing polemic between them). Hence, I here attempt to combine their approaches.

[107] Cf. Stuckrad 2005, p. 10.

[108] Hanegraaff 1996, p. 422, italics removed. Faivre, in contrast, views occultism either as 'a group of practices or a form of action that would derive its legitimacy from esotericism' (in other words, esotericism is the abstract theory, occultism its practical application), or a form of esotericism appearing with Éliphas Lévi during the second half of the nineteenth century (Faivre 1994, p. 35). The latter meaning might seem to be close to Hanegraaff's view, but Faivre does not specify what is unique about this later development, though he remarks that the appearance of the new term *occultism*, popularized by Lévi (as an -ism) in the 1850s, 'coincided precisely with the appearance of a trivial esotericism'. In other words, he seems to view occultism to some extent as a vulgar form of neo-esotericism, which can be contrasted with a more noble and elevated predecessor (p. 34). Hanegraaff's definition of occultism is the one that has become accepted by most specialists. Another definition worth considering is Marco Pasi's, which postulates occultism as a current within esotericism that is not intrinsically related to disenchantment and secularism. Pasi 2007, pp. 1364–1368.

[109] Hammer 2004, pp. 204–205.

[110] Hanegraaff 1996, p. 423. For a discussion of Swedenborgianism and Mesmerism as early stages in this development, see pp. 424–441. On borrowings from scientific discourse for legitimating reasons, see Hammer 2004, pp. 201–330.

[111] Prince 1987/2003, p. 55. Cf. Vinge 1971, pp. 78–79.

[112] Prince 1987/2003, p. 99. Cf. Vinge 1971, p. 136.

[113] There is no earlier broad study of the theme of this dissertation aside from those by Craciun and Gilbert & Gubar mentioned above. I will therefore not discuss previous scholarship under a separate heading. Instead, it will be reflected on continuously, in direct conjunction with the more specific aspects of the study that the scholars in question have treated.

Me and the devil,

Going to take you on a long and evil ride.

The woman is a devil,

That's what I've been told

THE DOORS, 'Woman is a Devil' (1969)

2

Woman and the Devil

SOME RECURRING MOTIFS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background for much of what will be treated in the rest of the present study. It commences with a short survey of the development of the figure of Satan, as well as the worship or idealization of him, and then proceeds to discuss Genesis 3, the narrative that lies at the root of most of the later ideas about Satan's intimate ties to woman. The interpretations of this text by Gnostics, Church Fathers, and reformers are delineated. This is followed by an examination of the notion of the Devil as a woman, as expressed, for example, in pictorial renderings of the serpent in Eden with the torso of a female. Thereafter, the enigmatic entity Baphomet—an example of how Satan has been given female or hermaphroditic traits in esoteric writings—is considered. Next, some background is provided on the Jewish demoness Lilith, who was seen as the first feminist in several nineteenth-century interpretations. Thereupon, some of the relevant motifs in folklore and witchcraft trials are surveyed, followed by a brief exploration of ideas concerning erotic relations between women and Satan. Finally, a few

concluding remarks are made about the topics brought up in the chapter, and how they will reappear throughout the study.

GOD'S HANGMAN: A CONCISE HISTORY OF SATAN

Before approaching perceptions of the relationship between woman and the Devil, a few general words about the history of the latter—and the veneration of him—are in order.[1]By and large, the Christian doctrines about Satan are not "biblical" in a strict sense, but the products of subsequent interpretations of the Bible formulated primarily by the early Fathers of the Church. Even if the core, or at least the seeds, of the later view of the figure of Satan are present in the New Testament, a complete doctrine was developed only eventually—gradually and over a long period of time.[2] The Hebrew word Satan comes from the root meaning oppose, obstruct, or accuse. It was translated into Greek as *diabolos*, which means adversary. From the Greek it was translated again, into *diabolus* (Latin), *Teufel* (German), Devil (English), and so on. The word Satan is used in several places in the Old Testament as a noun with said meaning. It also appears as a designation for one of God's angels who blocks the way of the wicked Balaam in Numbers 22:22–35, but here only signifies that this angel is acting as "a Satan" in obstructing Balaam's progress.[3] Satan as a specific personified being appears in the Book of Job, where he is a member of God's celestial court who proposes to test the piety of Job by subjecting him to the worst kinds of misfortune imaginable. As evidenced by Isaiah 45:7 ('I form light, and create darkness: I make peace, and I create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*.'), human suffering seems to have been accepted as God's will in the days of the Old Testament. Generally speaking, monotheism was consistently emphasized among the Jews. In the Talmud, the dualistic tendencies of some of the apocalyptic writers are completely refuted. The one god's goodness and absolute completeness are underscored. However, some slightly differing traditions can be found, for example, in the Aggadah, a compendium of morality tales, legends, sermons, and maxims that is the origin of many Christian tales about demons. Satan, often under the name Sammael, here emerges as a fallen angel who uses the serpent to entice Eve and Adam into transgression. He acts as a tempter, accuser-prosecutor, destroyer, and angel of death—but is still the servant of God. He never counteracts God's wishes or acts entirely of his own accord. In some Kabbalistic traditions, Satan receives more attention than in the Talmud and is

considered the destructive aspect of God, which has broken free and gained an independent existence. Overall, however, Satan did not play a prominent part in mainstream Jewish thinking after the apocalyptic period, except as an allegory of inner evil in mankind.[4]

Even so, certain inter-testamental texts (1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs) presented divergent dualistic ideas about a battle between a good power and an evil one, and some imagined an imminent cosmic showdown between the two. Such notions were transmitted to Christianity and are expressed in several places in the New Testament.[5] The Christian conception of Satan was likely also influenced early on, directly or indirectly, by non-Jewish sources, such as the Persian concept of the struggle between a principle of light, Ahura-Mazda, and a principle of darkness, Ahriman.[6] According to the New Testament, Satan attempts to entice mankind to commit sins, and causes disease and death. However, he and his retinue of evil spirits will be defeated when Christ returns as the world comes to an end. Satan also tempts Christ (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13; Mark 1:12–13), but is no match for the Son of God. Moreover, Christ is an exorcist, who repeatedly casts out demons that have entered the bodies of humans (Mark 1:23–26; Luke 11:14–26). An explanation of Satan's origin can be found in the Book of Revelation (composed ca. A.D. 90), which mentions a war in heaven where Michael and the good angels vanquish the wicked angels and their leader:

> And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:7–9)

Due to the influence of this cryptic visionary text, Old Testament passages that did not originally deal with Satan became interpreted as doing so. Isaiah 14:12–15 describes how the morning star falls from heaven. The original meaning of this passage is not certain, but it is probably intended to illustrate the inevitable downfall of Babylon by likening it to the morning star, which fades when the sun rises. The apocalyptic writers understood it as depicting how a member of God's court fell from heaven, since angels are frequently identified with stars in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, there then appeared an account of how Satan falls from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18). Notions of fallen angels in inter-testamental literature are here combined with the falling morning star in Isaiah. The Hebrew term for the

morning star, *Helel ben-shahar*, was eventually translated into Latin—via the Greek *Phosphoros*—as Lucifer, and in Christian tradition became an alternative name for Satan.[7]

The foundations of systematic Christian diabology were laid by Augustine (354–430), who saw the Devil as an evil angel who continued his war against God after falling, who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and who has tried ever since to make mankind stray from the righteous path. He was defined only by what he lacked (goodness, light), and, in spite of his hostility to God and man, in fact unwillingly served the interests of both through his actions (all ordained by divine providence).[8] This theological reassurance did little to diminish the fear of the Devil among the people of Europe through the centuries, and there also existed dualistic currents—both among medieval heretics like the Cathars, and in widespread popular and learned speculations—that viewed Satan as a truly threatening cosmic adversary who could challenge God's power. His split role in official theology as both the enemy of mankind and the punisher of the wicked, "God's hangman" according to a common sixteenth- and seventeenth-century metaphor, was quite paradoxical, and it is not surprising that some tried to resolve this by emphasizing his independence and agency.[9] This, of course, was also a possible solution to the age-old problem of theodicy.

On a popular level, Satan's identity was always fragmented into local variations.[10] At times, the Satan of European folklore was a beast quite different from the Satan of the church. There were, of course, no watertight compartments between the two, and they existed in the same cultural context—partly overlapping, partly in contradiction to one another. Thus, the figure could be simultaneously comical and frightening, for example, and function as a tool for upholding the social order as well as subverting it. In folklore, most entities are of a more ambivalent nature than the clear-cut good-or-evil division in official Christianity. Hence, Satan might at times be seen as a helpful spirit, whom it was possible to turn to for assistance.[11] A typical situation in which women asked the Devil for help was when they sought to avoid labour pains. We will return later to the biblical foundation for God's presumed disinclination to help them with this particular problem.

The official theological stance on Satan remained constant throughout Europe even long after Luther had nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the church door in Wittenberg in 1517. The sharpest break in the traditional teachings about Satan came about with the Enlightenment, rather than the Reformation.

Even though the reformers removed much that they felt did not have a biblical foundation, most of the medieval diabology was, somewhat surprisingly, retained. The writings of Luther and other central figures clearly show how strong the traditional teachings about the Devil still were.[12] In the following generations, influenced by the Protestant direct relationship with God, Satan gradually (even in Catholicism) came to be seen increasingly as an inner voice tempting the individual, even if this voice ultimately issued forth from a malevolent external spiritual entity. Darren Oldridge summarizes this development and its consequences for the perception of the Devil: 'As a creature that targeted the mind, Satan himself was increasingly portrayed as a figure of psychological depth.' This is reflected in the various versions of the Faust story from the late sixteenth century, where the Evil One often has a pensive, introspective, and philosophical disposition.[13] However, Satan had certainly not been reduced to nothing but an inner voice or a character in cerebral fiction by this time. He was still very much viewed as an active force in the world, as evidenced by the persecutions of witches, which will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

The later stages of the scientific revolution brought a naturalistic view of the world. Scientists like Isaac Newton and Robert Hooke stressed the role of God as the architect of the universe and the maker of natural laws, and this emphasis on fixed processes and laws left less room for diabolical or divine intervention. Enlightenment thinkers, who belonged to a small elite, tended to further distance themselves from Satan and even, in some cases, the figure of God himself. Slowly, such attitudes began to have a broader impact. At first, Satan started to disappear from public discourse and was exiled to the sphere of private belief. Eventually, belief in him started to wane even there. The reasons for this are exceedingly complex and partly go hand in hand with a general decline in organized religion. In the nineteenth century, industrialism —and the consequent transition from a rural village-based population to one that mostly dwelled in towns and cities—created a rupture in the structure of small parishes that had been the foundation of the church's hegemony over the world view of the public. The triumphs of medical science and our increased understanding of what caused, for example, earthquakes further limited the areas in which people felt Satan was active. Life became more predictable and demonic influence seemed less likely an explanation for the troubles that remained. It was now possible to believe in God without getting Satan as a mandatory part of the bargain. In the second half of the twentieth century, this

even became a common position among liberal Protestant theologians. However, this development was slow in many places, and for most of the period covered in this study a majority of the clergy and quite a few of their parishioners maintained their belief in a very real Satan. This applies to an even greater extent to Catholic communities, and we can note that the 1907 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* without any real hesitation still treats the Devil as an external reality.[14]

APOSTLES OF DARKNESS: AN EVEN MORE CONCISE HISTORY OF SATANISM

The Christian idea of the Devil soon gave rise to the notion of certain wicked people, Satanists, actively worshipping him. Conceptions about Satanists have been present in Western culture practically since the dawn of Christianity. Actual Satanists, in any reasonable sense of the word, have not been around for quite as long.[15] Many of the currents and figures in this brief sketch will be treated more in-depth further on in the present study, but it seems useful to provide a rough outline of the history of Satanism already at the outset.

Heretical Christian sects like the Cathars and Bogomils were unjustly persecuted in the Middle Ages as Satanists, and in the early modern era supposed witches were identified as adherents of Satan and punished accordingly (as mentioned, this will be analysed in more detail later). Abortionists and poisoners close to the court of Louis XIV, certain wealthy English rakes, Freemasons, and various esotericists in fin-de-siècle France, and many others, were also slandered as Devil worshippers. On closer inspection, none of these seem actually to have been Satanists, with the French seventeenth-century example as a possible exception.[16] While accusations of Satanism have been rife throughout much of the Christian era, an enduring and public tradition of veritable practised Satanism was first instated in 1966, with the founding of the Church of Satan in San Francisco. Yet, there were people who nourished an intense sympathy for the Devil much earlier. In the late eighteenth century, we can find purely literary Satanists among the Romantics, who admired the heroic individualist Satan they discerned in John Milton's portrayal of the figure in *Paradise Lost* (1667), although Milton himself almost certainly had not at all intended his Devil to be interpreted in such a fashion.[17] In spite of the heated debate inspired by the Romantic celebration of Satan, the Luciferian leanings of the radical authors in question

seldom extended beyond occasional outbursts in a text or two, even if the pro-Satanic ideas they propagated came to be established as a specific language of cultural protest that would be enduring (see the discussion of their influence in chapter 3). The Polish Decadent Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927), who turns up in chapter 7 of the present volume, was a more consistent Satanist, who made Lucifer the focus of a whole system of thought that he adhered to for a long time. As we will see in the next chapter, Satan was also popular among nineteenth-century socialists as a symbol of revolt against capitalism and the bourgeoisie. Concurrently, poets like Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) and visual artists like Félicien Rops (1833–1898) emphasized Satan's connection to sensuality and carnal pleasures, making the figure an important image also in some forms of critique of Christian moralism and asceticism (on this, see chapter 7).

In the context of Western esotericism, one of the first to unequivocally praise Satan was H. P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), chief ideologist of the Theosophical Society, who will be properly introduced in chapter 3. Satan does not, however, occupy a central enough position in her system for it to be labelled a form of Satanism as a whole. Even more subdued were the Satanic tendencies in the writings of one of her sources of inspiration, the French occultist Éliphas Lévi (1810–1875), who will be more thoroughly presented in the section on Baphomet at the end of this chapter. Neither Blavatsky nor Lévi, then, were Satanists in a strict sense, especially not the French magus. The first person to actually construct an entire esoteric system, albeit a rather miniscule one, around Satan was the obscure Danish occultist Ben Kadosh (Carl William Hansen, 1872–1936), who published a Luciferian pamphlet in 1906. His Satanic circle, if it was even realized in the manner he intended, was as tiny as the volume of his writings.[18] The German 1920s esoteric order Fraternitas Saturni was considerably more populous. It viewed Satan as an initiator and celebrated Luciferian masses, but whether these features were sufficiently pronounced to merit a designation of the entire group as Satanic is not self-evident.[19] The "Satanic" temple (this was a term she herself used) briefly operated by Maria de Naglowska in 1930s Paris presents similar problems. Its aim was an integration of Satan and God, and ultimately God seems to have been more important in the equation.[20] Naglowska's importance lies in her being the first to hold rituals open to the public, which were called Satanic by the congregation itself.

None of these groups and individuals founded lasting Satanic traditions. Fraternitas Saturni still exists, but seems to have toned down the Satanic content almost entirely. This applies even more to the Theosophical Society. A small Luciferian organization in Scandinavia today draws on Kadosh's ideas, but this is a revival rather than a direct continuation.[21] To summarize, Satanism probably did not exist as a religious practice or coherent philosophical system any earlier than around the year 1900, when figures like Przybyszewski and Kadosh pioneered such ideas. But as a more or less fixed and distinct strategy for cultural critique—a colourful form of drastic counter-discourse organized around Satan as the central metaphor and utilized by socialists, radical individualists, feminists, and others—it has been around for at least twice as long. Having acquainted ourselves in a rudimentary fashion with the history of Satan and Satanism, we shall now turn to the various ways in which the two have been linked to women. As seems quite logical, we will begin this account by looking at the first book of the Bible, Genesis—more precisely, its third chapter.

GENESIS 3: FOUNDATION TEXT OF CHRISTIAN MISOGYNY?

Everyone knows the tale of the Fall of Man told in Genesis 3. The serpent tricks Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, and then Adam eats too. Afterwards God punishes them both. But what is the purpose behind this narrative? It has been asserted that Genesis 3 sets out a social charter, which affects all women due to the fact that Eve, the woman, is the first in the tale to transgress: 'How things began becomes the justification for how they must be,' as Rachel Havrelock puts it.[22] However, even if this seems a persuasive suggestion, the phrasing can easily give the impression that there is one single, static idea about how things must be that is being expressed, and that this is somehow unchangeably inherent in the text itself. On the contrary, Genesis 3 has been used in many widely differing ways, and interpretations of it are, of course, always culturally contingent. Even so, when looking at the reception history of this passage, as it pertains to gender relations, it soon becomes clear that only during the last 150 years or so has it been used to any notable extent for purposes other than legitimating the subjugation of women. Some have alleged that it also functions as a dangerous justification for violence against women, which is in effect even in our own time. Therefore, it has been claimed, the

text needs to be deconstructed and subverted in order to come to terms with these problems.[23]

Of course, Genesis 3 is a central story in our culture even pertaining to matters that do not relate to gender. R. W. L. Moberly asserts about the Fall narrative: 'No story from the Old Testament has had a greater impact upon the theology of the Christian Church and the art and literature of Western civilization.'[24] Tryggve Mettinger views the issue at stake to be 'whether the two humans will respect the line of demarcation between themselves and the divine world', since '[w]isdom (knowledge) and immortality are divine prerogatives'.[25] The hubris theme is, in fact, recurrent throughout the chapters of Genesis. For example, we see it again in the Tower of Babel story (Gen. 11:1–9), where mankind tries to construct a tower reaching the heavens and is punished by God, who creates the different languages so that men can no longer understand one another and cooperate on this blasphemous building project.[26]

There is a certain ambiguity inherent in the account of the Fall, which has troubled many readers through the ages. God says to Adam: 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' (Gen. 2:17). The serpent says to Eve: 'Ye shall not surely die', and guarantees her that 'the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil' (Gen. 3:4–5). Taken at face value, it would seem that the serpent's words come true after the couple have eaten the fruit: Adam and Eve do not die, at least not instantly, and their eyes are opened in accordance with the Tempter's assurance. It might thus appear as if God has lied to man, while the serpent's promise is kept. The serpent's implied suggestion—that God's prohibition stems from fear, envy, and despotic tendencies—may not seem so far-fetched.[27] However, most readers will have been fully convinced of God's benevolence beforehand, and historically this has made such a reading unreasonable (with the only prominent early exception appearing in the exegesis of certain Gnostic groups). Of course, things began to change when the rebellious attitudes of the Romantics and Enlightenment thinkers towards the Bible started spreading in the late eighteenth century. This new and subversive outlook made the serpent seem less self-evidently the villain of the story to some.

The feminist historian and "mythographer" Marina Warner has claimed that in spite of its primary function as the main Christian symbol of evil, the

serpent in Western culture also denotes something that is positive in her opinion, 'a kind of heterodox knowledge and sexuality that Christianity has spurned'.[28] This is true, but primarily in terms of counter-discourses protesting against the hegemonic significance of the serpent and its wider social implications. Such is the case at least with the specifically Edenic serpent. In other contexts, serpents can have quite different meanings, as seen, for example, in the one entwining the Rod of Asclepius (which may be linked to the *nehushtan*, the brazen serpent made by Moses, mentioned in Num. 21:6–9; 2 Kings 18:4), which is used as a symbol of the medical profession.[29] Nevertheless, in the Old Testament, snakes are fairly consistently strongly negative symbols, with the exception of Moses's serpent.[30] Still, one important thing to note about Genesis 3 is that it never identifies the serpent as Satan. This connection came about only later, but has been the accepted reading throughout most of Christianity's history.[31]

Like the notion of the serpent as Satan, the later idea of Eve as a temptress luring Adam to his doom does not really appear explicitly in Genesis (she simply gives some of the fruit to Adam, who is with her, and he eats), but was a development that should, as the Bible scholar Jean M. Higgins underscores, be seen as an expression 'of imagination, drawn mainly from each commentator's own presuppositions and cultural expectations'.[32] The inferences made by the authors of the New Testament from the interpretation of Eve as a temptress can quite often be rather disquieting. For example, in Paul's letter to Timothy, Eve's actions in Genesis 3 are used as a justification for why women must remain silent and submissive. 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,' Paul (or perhaps one of his disciples writing under his name) informs us. Therefore, he says, 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence' (1 Tim. 2:12–14).[33] Many others through the ages would subsequently adopt this line of reasoning.

The topic of women's status within the early church has been debated for a long time. Looking at scripture itself, it is easy to find several passages that give strong support to the subordination of women, such as the aforementioned 1 Timothy (2:11–15) but also Titus 2:3–5, Ephesians 5:22–33, Colossians 3:18, and 1 Corinthians 14:34–36. Phrasings like 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord' (Eph. 5:22), and the ways in which they have been used to serve patriarchal ends, make it easy to see why some feminists would later view God as the protector of patriarchy (and,

occasionally, Satan as an ally in the fight against it).[34] Controversial passages like those in 1 Timothy and Ephesians have been identified by modern biblical scholars as probably not written by Paul himself, but since this is a fairly new discovery it has mattered little up until very recently.[35] Women's studies scholar Katharine M. Rogers observes about Paul's (or the writer who used his name) emphasis on the serpent's seduction of Eve:

> St. Paul's doctrines wielded an enormous influence on Christian culture. … The foundations of Christian misogyny—its guilt about sex, its insistence on female subjection, its dread of female seduction—are all in St. Paul's epistles. They provided a convenient supply of divinely inspired misogynistic texts for any Christian writer who chose to use them; his statements on female subjection were still being quoted in the twentieth century by opponents of equality for women.[36]

Eve, of course, is not the only important female figure in Christianity. From an early date, it became commonplace to emphasize the Virgin Mary's role as the "second Eve", who set right the wrongs committed by the first Eve. Tertullian (whose views we will return to presently), for example, exemplified this mirroring by stating: 'Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel.'[37] This, however, tended to generate a view of woman as laudable only when she was a mother first and foremost. Even so, motherhood itself was, in a way, perceived as cursed, given the punishment God pronounced over Eve for her transgression in Eden: 'in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children' (Gen. 3:16). Many pious men, and women too, concluded that it would hence be sinful to in any way mitigate labour pains, as they represent a penance meted out by God himself.[38] In the same judgement, God also says to Eve: 'thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee'. This unequivocal statement provided a firm underpinning for explicitly patriarchal New Testament passages like Ephesians 5:22.

OF SERPENTS AND GATEWAYS: GNOSTICS, CHURCH FATHERS, AND REFORMERS

The Gnostics, a radically dualistic set of groups that arose to some prominence and considerable notoriety around the first century A.D., could in some cases revere the Edenic serpent as a bringer of *gnosis* (Greek for 'knowledge', here of a spiritual kind), a messenger of the true God who sought to help man break free from the false paradise created by an evil entity, the *demiurge*, who was posing as God.[39] Jeffrey Burton Russell emphasizes that for many Gnostics 'Adam and Eve's revolt against Yahweh takes on a

reverse moral meaning'. Since the "God" of the Old Testament is an evil demiurge, rebelling against him is logically seen as a virtue.[40] Even so, Gnostics vacillated considerably between perceiving the serpent as good or evil, with great variations not only between different groups in the heterogeneous current of thought usually referred to as Gnostic but also within the individual groups themselves. So-called Valentinian Gnostics could see the serpent as an evil power, even though the transgression it brought about was positive. The expulsion from Paradise that the infringement led to was also favourable, since it helped man realize that Paradise was not the true, eternal joy—which the demiurge tried to keep us from.[41] Sethian Gnostics at times identified the serpent as the saviour, whilst agreeing with the negative view of Paradise as a place of empty pleasure. However, there are also examples of Sethian texts where the serpent appears in a less positive light.[42]

Gnosticism proper more or less died out, at the latest, in the sixth century, and for a long time people were mainly familiar with Gnostic ideas through the polemics the early Church Fathers directed against them (there were, however, also three codices of Gnostic writings known prior to the 1945 Nag Hammadi discovery, two of which were unearthed as early as the late eighteenth century).[43] Pseudo-Tertullian, for example, wrote with horror about the Ophite Gnostics that they are called thus (from the Greek *ophis*, 'snake') because they prefer the Edenic tempter 'even to Christ himself; for it was he, they say, who gave us the origin of the knowledge of good and evil'.[44] Subversive nineteenth-century readings of the serpent in Eden as a bringer of enlightenment, and Eve as a heroine by implication, occasionally drew on these condemnations for inspiration, as we will see. It should be kept in mind, however, that none of the original Gnostic groups identified a benevolent serpent with Satan—they were not Satanists of any kind. The serpent, to those that had a positive view of it, was working against the Devil, who was typically identified with (or considered the servant of) the demiurge.

As is the case with Satan, much of the Christian view of Eve is more traditional than scriptural, and this tradition draws more on understandings of her in the New Testament than in the Old. Even if a 'fundamentalist' *sola scriptura* reading of the Bible is impossible in an absolute sense (there will always be intertexts and preconceptions that shape the understanding of the words), it is clearly evident that many of the ideas about Eve are derived from identifiable external sources. The interpretations of the Church Fathers, whose exegesis largely laid the foundation for the following centuries of Christian

thought on the figure, depended to some degree on non-scriptural Jewish writings. Various such texts had been translated into Greek, and they propounded a harshly negative view of Eve's role in Genesis 3 that coloured these early theologians. More unexpectedly, the Fathers were also influenced by the pagan tale of Pandora—as retold by Hesiod—who unleashed misery in the world through her curiosity. While they dismissed it as a laughable but charming fable, their discussions of it still functioned as a commentary on the story of Eve, whose sin thus became painted in an even darker hue of wickedness.[45] The fact that pagans connected their holy women with snakes, and some elements in narratives about women having sexual intercourse with the so-called Watcher angels (see the section about demon lovers), also helped blacken Eve's reputation, and makes it possible to speak of a 'demon-Eve tradition'. As John A. Phillips underscores, this does not, however, 'appear in quite so crude a form in normative Jewish and Christian theology, and is, in fact, repudiated', although it nevertheless instructed orthodox views of the matter.[46]

One of the most frequently quoted (especially by feminists critical of Christianity) commentators on the Fall is Tertullian (ca. 160–225), the Church Father who eventually joined the ultra-ascetic Montanist sect. While some of his statements later came to be seen as heretical (in contrast to many other Fathers, he was never canonized by the Catholic Church), much of his writing has remained influential.[47] In his treatise *De cultu feminarum* ('On the Apparel of Women'), Tertullian holds up Eve as an image of all women, and famously designates her 'the devil's gateway'. The passage is worth quoting in full due to its great influence:

> Are you not aware that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on in our own time; the guilt must then, of necessity, live on also. You are the devil's gateway. You first plucked the forbidden fruit and first deserted the divine law. You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not brave enough to attack.[48]

F. Forrester Church has argued that Tertullian did not consistently blame woman for the Fall, and that the passage quoted is really the only place where he does so. Elsewhere, Adam's guilt is, in fact, emphasized.[49] However, what Tertullian "really" intended to say is less important here than how his words have been received historically—both how they have been used as a tool of patriarchal oppression and how feminists have employed them in portraying Christianity as tyrannical. Tertullian has often served as the straw used to

construct Christianity as something that must be seen as a straw man oppressor of occasionally exaggerated proportions.

Tertullian, of course, was far from alone among early theologians to denigrate Eve and, by extension, all of womankind. Irenaeus (d. ca. 202) also highlighted Eve's guilt and held up her treachery as the decisive moment of the Fall.[50] John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), another important Church Father, observed regarding 1 Timothy:

> The woman taught once and for all, and upset everything. Therefore he [Paul] says, 'Let her not teach'. Then does this mean something for the rest of womankind, that Eve suffered this judgement? It certainly does concern other women! For the female sex is weak and vain, and here this is said of the whole sex.[51]

In other words, according to this authoritative thinker, woman having "taught" in Eden when she gave Adam the fruit, and the comments on this in the New Testament, are to be understood as an injunction that women are not to act as teachers in a religious context. Perhaps the most well-known Church Father of all, Augustine (354–430), also stressed Eve's weakness compared to Adam's strength. This, he claims, was the reason why Satan started 'with the lower member of that human couple in order to arrive gradually at the whole'. 'Presumably', Augustine continues, 'he did not think that the man was readily gullible.'[52] Elsewhere, Augustine states that even before Eve was approached by Satan, there 'were in her mind a certain love of her own power and a certain proud self-presumption'. In other words: Eve was somehow impure and rebellious from the start.[53] Religion and philosophy professor Charles Ess has contended that Augustine, through certain elements in the foundations he created for the doctrine of Original Sin, is the foremost architect of the image of Eve as a temptress and cause of sin, a "chaos agent" who threatens male hierarchies. This teaching, by highlighting disobedience as the principal sin, makes obedience to (patriarchal) authority the highest good, no matter if said authority happens to be God, king, or husband. Hereby, Ess claims, this myth 'sacralizes both a patriarchal relationship between the sexes … and the hierarchical politics of monarchy and empire'.[54] Ess's analysis is close to what we will find among many nineteenth-century feminist writers—both those with and those without sympathy for the Devil.

In comparison to the Church Fathers, the major Protestant theologians were, it might seem, slightly milder, though very condescending, in their view of Eve. Much like Augustine and many others, Martin Luther asserted that Eve

was especially weak, which made her susceptible to the guiles of Satan. Luther even insisted that 'if he had tempted Adam first, the victory would have been Adam's', and the man 'would have crushed the serpent with his foot'.[55] Even so, Luther as well as Calvin rejected the idea of Eve's greater culpability, since her inferiority to some degree excused her transgression.[56] To Calvin, the real blame lay with Adam who should have known better than to follow his wife's example. According to the Protestant exegetes, Eve's actual crime was straying from the protection and supervision of her husband, and his was allowing her to do so.[57] Luther emphasized that women should still see themselves as paying off the debt of Eve's sin by staying at home and focusing on being good mothers and wives, and steering clear of the important matters best handled by men. Hereby, they can hope to attain salvation and eternal life.[58] The attitude towards women's role in society that Protestants inferred from exegesis of Genesis 3, then, was not much different from that which the Church Fathers and the Catholic theologians following in their footsteps had proposed. According to Jeffrey Burton Russell, 'the Protestant Reformation, with its return to the primitive Christianity of the apostles and fathers, emphasized mistrust of women even more than did the Catholic Church.'[59]

Eve's special relationship with Satan was not only underscored by scholarly theologians but also in more popular contexts. For example, in the fourteenth-century English mystery play *The Creation and Fall*, one of the so-called Chester plays, Adam proclaims: 'My lecherous wife hath been my foe, / The devil's envy hath shente [injured] me also: / These two together well may go, / The sister and the brother.'[60] Such somewhat crude portrayals, too, are a crucial factor to consider when trying to grasp the broader long-term cultural significance of Genesis 3.

'SUPERIOR; FOR INFERIOR WHO IS FREE': EVE IN MILTON'S PARADISE LOST

However, a more subtle artistic treatment, belonging to the loftiest realms of high culture, has been even more important: John Milton's literary retelling of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* (1667).[61] We will consider other aspects of Milton's epic in the next chapter, for now focusing on a brief examination of the portrayal of Eve's interaction with Satan in this text, and how it has been received. In Milton's version of the story, the authorial voice speaks of the

'much deceived, much failing, hapless Eve' even before her actual encounter with the tempter. Satan says that he shuns the 'higher intellectual more' of Adam and instead prefers Eve as the easier target.[62] Adam lays down that Eve is his mental inferior who less than he resembles the Maker, wherefore, the angel Raphael emphasizes in a conversation with him, Adam is to be her ruler.[63] Having assumed the shape of the serpent, the Devil flatters Eve by addressing her as 'sovereign mistress', 'Queen of this universe', and 'Goddess humane'.[64] The totality of the serpent's compliments and such words from the narrator indicates, as C. A. Patrides points out, that Eve is 'prejudiced toward Satan's arguments' and 'partly fallen before she actually ate the forbidden fruit', being naturally disposed towards an inappropriate longing for autonomy and self-apotheosis.[65] Northrop Frye, the influential scholar of literature, more sympathetically comments: 'What he [Satan] says thereby instills in her the notion of her own individuality, somebody in her own right, herself and not merely an appendage to Adam or to God.'[66]

The Devil begins his work on Eve by appearing to her in a dream, which foreshadows what she will soon experience in daytime. In the dream, she chances upon the forbidden tree, and there stands Satan, in angelic guise, lamenting that no-one eats from it. He asks her rhetorically 'is knowledge so despised?'[67] Next, he advises her: 'Taste this, and be henceforth among the gods / Thyself a goddess, not to Earth confined.' Eve tastes, and, as she later relates to Adam, 'Forthwith up to the clouds / With him I flew, and underneath beheld / The earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide.'[68] As John M. Steadman has pointed out, this echoes both what has traditionally come to be interpreted as a passage in the Bible detailing Satan's hubris (Isa. 14:13: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God'), and Satan's temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:5–8; Luke 4:1–13) where the son of God is swept up to a high mountain and offered dominion over the world. Further, it also reflects tropes concerning the witch's flight to the sabbath.[69] In other words, Eve is conflated with both Satan himself and witches, and subject to the same temptation as Christ. However, where Christ sternly refuses, Eve, of course, eventually succumbs. Notable here is also the individualist and meritocratic ethos propagated by Lucifer, when he urges Eve to 'Ascend to heaven, by merit thine'.[70] Such phrasings would later strike a chord with Romantic artists and authors.

Satan, during his persuasion of the fully awake Eve, praises the tree as 'O sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving plant / Mother of science', and while on the topic of the possible punishment for eating its fruits challenges God's authority by putting forward the textbook theodicy: 'God . . . cannot hurt ye, and be just; / Not just, not God; not feared then, nor obeyed'. Moreover, he questions God's reasons for setting up the prohibition:

> . . . and wherein lies
> The offense, that man should thus attain to know?
> What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree
> Impart against his will if all be his?
> Or is it envy, and can envy dwell
> In heavenly breasts?[71]

Is such a jealous God really good and would an all-powerful God really have to be jealous? Such are the seeds of doubt sown by Lucifer, and after gorging herself on the forbidden fruit Eve addresses him as her 'Best guide' and says: 'not following thee, I had remained / In ignorance, thou openest wisdom's way', while God is now described by her as 'Our great forbidder, safe with all his spies / About him'.[72]

Not yet aware of the terrible consequences of her act, Eve even briefly contemplates keeping her newfound forbidden knowledge to herself. She frames this in an argument that is both "feminist", in a sense, and focused on improving her relationship with Adam. She wonders if refraining from sharing the fruit might

> … add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his [Adam's] love
> And render me more equal, and perhaps
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior; for inferior who is free?[73]

It is easy to see how readers with feminist leanings might have read these words as a fully justified appeal for equality between the sexes, and Satan as offering precisely this. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that even if Milton portrays Eve as having "feminist" inclinations, this is not intended to be seen as a positive trait, but as a flaw that helps facilitate the Fall. Yet, this portrayal firmly established the notion of Satan offering emancipation for

females, even if Milton's motive for making this connection was probably to demonize what he viewed as ill-advised longings in womankind. His message here is clearly not feminist. Rather, reading the whole epic, or even just all of Book IX (wherein the Fall occurs), makes it clear that he argues that it is an absolute necessity that wives be completely obedient to their husbands, lest their impudent attempts at independence bring about cosmic chaos and doom. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, however, Milton's epic is characterized by a certain textual instability and ambiguity, which has rendered it particularly amenable to readings that contradict the author's professed intention (which he famously declared was 'to justify the ways of God to men').[74] Many readers, especially in the Romantic era, felt that Milton's justification of God's ways was unconvincing, and that the arguments put forward by Satan often resonated more with the egalitarian, individualistic ethos that was the hallmark of many late eighteenth-century radicals, who typically emphasized a more personal moral philosophy as opposed to the legalistic moral commands of the church. The serpent's up-valuation of knowledge, even its "forbidden" varieties, also appeared quite appealing to some people. For such freethinkers, Satan's designation of the tree as the 'Mother of science' probably also echoed of clashes with the church over certain scientific advances.

For example, Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), writing in the year of revolution 1789, asked rhetorically if we ought not see mankind's banishment from Eden as 'unquestionably the most fortunate and greatest event in mankind's history'.[75] As Phillips points out, this reading can be understood as implying that we should 'regard Eve as a female Prometheus rather than a Pandora'.[76] However, Schiller does not single Eve out as a heroine, but speaks of mankind in broader terms instead, emphasizing that it here 'set out on the hazardous path towards moral freedom'. The supposed paradisiacal condition in the Garden of Eden represents nothing but 'ignorance and servitude' to Schiller.[77] We will find parallel examples of this exact sentiment many times in the material scrutinized in this study, but it would take a while longer into the Romantic era before it was connected with a reassessment specifically of Eve.

Much later, starting in the 1970s, feminist scholars of literature also interpreted Eve's role in *Paradise Lost* in a distinctly subversive manner that owes a great deal to the reading strategies established by the Romantics. As stated in the introductory chapter, the position adopted by these scholars is

itself best described as an academic feminist revival of Romantic Satanism. The most famous example of this is no doubt to be found in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's extremely influential 1979 book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Gilbert and Gubar claim that 'Milton's Eve falls for exactly the same reason that Satan does: because she wants to be "as Gods" and because, like him, she is secretly dissatisfied with her place, secretly preoccupied with questions of "equality" '.[78] Eve, they argue, needs a toppling of the 'hierarchical status quo' as badly as Satan does.[79] This observation is no doubt correct regarding Eve. As we have seen, her concern with a more symmetrical distribution of power in her relationship with Adam is quite clearly stated in Milton's text. However, that Satan is motivated primarily by egalitarian longings—and for this reason is a natural ally for Eve—is less evident in *Paradise Lost* itself, and chiefly reflects the Romantics' interpretation of the figure. Gilbert and Gubar identify Genesis 3 as 'Western patriarchy's central culture myth', perhaps indicating why they feel the urge to propose ways in which it can be subverted.[80] As expressed in the introduction, I am unconvinced by their supposed examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women reading Milton in this way. To a great extent, this seems more like a projection of the present-day feminists' own fascination with Satan the rebel onto the woman authors in question. The former's detailed (Satanic) feminist reading of Milton is just that, their reading, not that of any of the historical figures they ascribe it to.

Gilbert and Gubar assert that Milton's Satan is 'in certain crucial ways very much *like* women' as well as 'enormously attractive to women'.[81] Milton, they argue, 'wars upon women with a barrage of angry words, just as God wars upon Satan'.[82] Their sympathy for the Devil shines through in the views they ascribe to woman writers of the past (without providing particularly convincing examples of such individuals really having thought along these lines): 'It is not surprising, then, that women, identifying at their most rebellious with Satan, at their least rebellious with Eve, and almost all the time with the Romantic poets, should have been similarly obsessed with the apocalyptic social transformations a revision of Milton might bring about.'[83] The same obsession is quite clearly present in this famous late 1970s book of feminist scholarship as well.

Christine Froula, in an article published four years later and inspired by the publication of Elaine Pagels's *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979), continues in the

same vein. She sees *Paradise Lost* as 'a violent parable of *gnosis* punished' and argues for 'active rereadings of the texts that have shaped our traditions'.[84] In a 1986 article, William Shullenberger attacks Gilbert, Gubar, and Froula's 'implicit or explicit feminist admiration of Satan', claiming that Satan's '*non serviam* seems to provide feminist criticism a ready and easy, yet tragically self-defeating, way to intellectual freedom'.[85] In his view, '[a]ll that is Edenic argues against the feminist embrace of Satan as the covert hero of the poem and Eve's model for a self-assertive identity', and Gilbert and Gubar's idea that 'Satan's Romantic self-assertion provides Eve the only alternative to existence as domestic drudge' is both deplorable and wrong in terms of the internal logic of the text itself.[86] I am largely in agreement with Shullenberger here. The reading is no doubt strongly tendentious, and hardly reflects the views of either Milton, his contemporaries, or the specific woman authors Gilbert and Gubar ascribe it to. It does, however, interestingly demonstrate the enduring vitality of the Romantic Satanist mode of reading, even in academia. It is also correct in the sense that there were indeed, as we will see, women in the nineteenth century who did interpret the story in Genesis 3, and literary reworkings of it, much like Gilbert and Gubar suggest (though they do not mention these writers in their analysis). I will discuss this in particular in chapter 4.

THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN: REPRESENTATIONS OF SATAN AS FEMALE

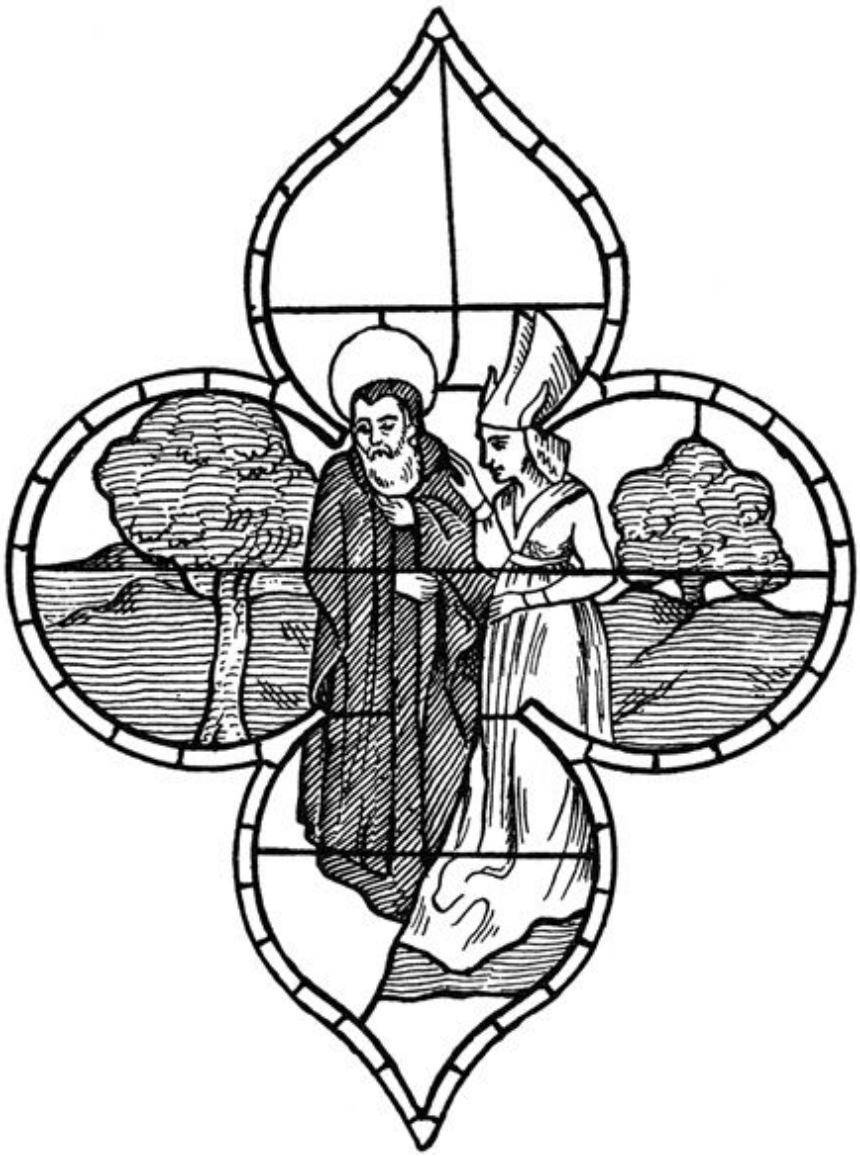

FIGURE 2.1 Satan in female guise tempting St Mars. Fifteenth-century stained glass window in the Sainte-chapelle, Riom, France. Line drawing from Charles Wall's *Devils: Their Origins and History* (1904).

Having considered some aspects of Satan's relation to woman, we will now turn our attention to notions of the figure of Satan as a woman (figure 2.1). Jeffrey Burton Russell notes that 'tradition has spoken of the Devil, as it has of the Lord, in masculine terms', with the figure being denoted as a 'he' in most languages. While there is a plethora of lesser female spirits of evil, their leader is usually symbolized as masculine. 'Yet', Russell underscores, 'theology does not require a masculine Devil, and in fact Christian theologians have traditionally argued that the Devil, being an angel, has no

specific sex.'[87] From early on, this is also reflected, in some ways, in images of this personage. Visual representations of the Devil did not become common until the ninth century, after which a bewildering variety of ways to depict him soon arose. While Lucifer's likeness is a highly heterogeneous affair, Russell states that in medieval iconography he is very seldom female.[88] This is not quite true.

First, it is worth highlighting that Satan quite often exhibits some female anatomical parts, typically breasts, which make him a sort of hermaphrodite monster.[89] This can be seen simply as an aspect of the general ontological instability of demonic creatures, which often incorporate features from spheres that would usually be carefully guarded as separate categories that should not in any way be mixed, such as human and animal. Gender-bending would then be another sign of the liminal and blasphemously category-defying nature of Lucifer and his demons (figures 2.2 and 2.3).

FIGURE 2.2 Hermaphroditic Devil. Satan (with drooping breasts) on his throne, attended by his followers; woodcut from Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses*, 1597.

FIGURES 2.3 Hermaphroditic Devil. Detail from Albrecht Dürer's *Der Engel mit dem Schlüssel zum Abgrund*; woodcut, 1497–1498.

Secondly, a more straightforwardly female Satan can be seen in the actually very common depictions of the snake in the Garden of Eden with a woman's head on its serpentine body and sometimes also the breasts of a woman. This, in fact, contradicts Russell's claim that a female Satan was unusual, as this motif was widespread in both visual art and theatre for hundreds of years.[90] J. B. Trapp even states that it was the most frequent way of representing the Edenic serpent from the late twelfth century until the late sixteenth century, when the human features of the creature disappear and it becomes, once more,

only reptilian.[91] Exactly when the notion of a female snake was established is difficult to say, but the earliest translation of the Bible into Latin rendered the word as *serpens*—feminine gender.[92] The first explicit statement of this is probably in the twelfth-century French theologian Peter Comestor's *Historia Libri Genesis*, where he suggests that Satan chose this guise 'since like approves of like'.[93] A female Edenic serpent later appears in well-known literary works like the allegorical poem *Piers the Plowman* (ca. 1360–1387, usually ascribed to one William Langland, about whom little is known for certain), where it is described as 'y-lik a lusard, with a lady visage'.[94] Worth mentioning here is also *Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles* ('Book for the Education of his Daughters', 1371–1372) by Geoffrey IV de la Tour Landry, which was translated into several languages and became one of the most popular educational treatises of its time. Geoffrey attempts to instil in his daughters the lesson that women should defer to fathers and husbands in anything but domestic matters and makes his point by retelling how Eve broke this rule when she conversed with the serpent, 'whiche as the Hystorye sayth hadde a face ryght fayre lyke the face of a woman'.[95]

John K. Bonnell has argued that authors of mystery plays adopted Comestor's notion of a female serpent, and then made it part of the stage conventions for depicting Satan in the Garden of Eden. These plays would then in turn have influenced painters and sculptors.[96] John A. Phillips, however, rejects Bonnell's thesis, since there is both textual and visual evidence of the idea that predates the mystery plays in question. Regardless of which depiction came first—that in the mystery plays, in visual art, or in theological works—they all firmly established the concept of Eve plotting against Adam in cohorts with a female Satan. Phillips suggests this idea was, at times, 'governed by a male dread of conspiring females, the fear of the witches' coven', while Norris claims that it 'chimed in with popular beliefs about women's love of gossip and pleasure in subverting male authority'.[97]

There are countless images in visual art of a female serpent-Satan in the Garden of Eden, and some of the examples occupy what must be counted among the most central positions in Europe imaginable. For example, Michelangelo's *Temptation and Expulsion* (1511) in the Sistine Chapel ceiling features such a creature handing Eve the forbidden fruit (figure 2.4).[98] It can also be found in the form of a sculpture (ca. 1220) at the so-called Portal of the Virgin, the Western entrance to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.[99]

Masters like Raphael (1511), Lukas Cranach (1530), and Hans Holbein the Younger (ca. 1538) painted the motif, and it can thus since long be seen in churches and museums (e.g. figure 2.5) around the world, as well as reproduced in numerous books.[100]These, then, are not isolated examples, nor marginal ones. From a historical perspective, Satan as female is a centre-stage concept in Christian culture.

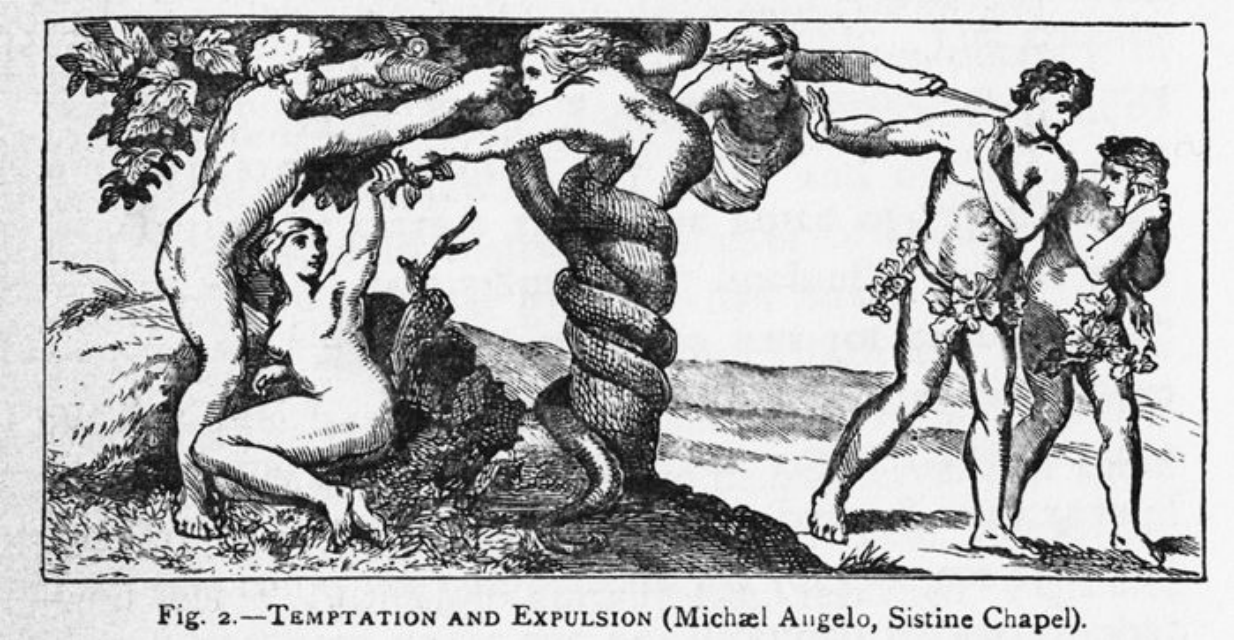

FIGURE 2.4 The Edenic serpent in the shape of a woman. Michelangelo's *Temptation and Expulsion* (1511), Sistine Chapel ceiling; here rendered as a line drawing from Moncure Conway's *Demonology and Devil Lore* (1878).

FIGURE 2.5 The Edenic serpent in the shape of a woman. *Adam, Eve, and Satan*, marble sculpture by Michelangelo Naccherino (1550–1622), Boboli Gardens, Florence. Photo by the author.

In various narratives from different genres, including the well-known legends about St. Anthony, Satan also appears in the shape of a woman, specifically to tempt male saints or heroes. Similarly, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (1485) contains two manifestations of Satan in the guise of an attractive lady.[101] An episode in John Dryden's *King Arthur* (1691), later repeated in a ballad by Walter Scott, also involves such a tempting female Satan, who tears a hunter succumbing to her wiles to pieces.[102] A rather coarse and intensely misogynist formulation of the subject can be found in the

Jacobean play *A Mad World, My Masters* by Thomas Middleton, where a character, after having been accosted by a succubus, asks:

> What knows the lecher when he clips his whore
> Whether it be the devil his parts adore?
> They're both so like that, in our natural sense,
> I could discern no change nor difference.[103]

Variations on this motif appeared several times in French literature during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—as we will see in chapter 5, where Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* ('The Devil in Love', 1772) and its literary descendants are discussed. In these cases, and likely in some of the others as well, Satan's reason for assuming a female form is strictly instrumental and does not necessarily reflect an innate "femininity" on the part of this sexless fallen angel. Nevertheless, it might historically have been taken to have such implications by some.

The Devil in female shape also occasionally appears in folklore.[104] Even early cinema displays variations on this motif. *Satan s'amuse* ('Satan Amuses Himself', 1907), a short film by the pioneering Spanish director Segundo de Chomón (1871–1929), ends with a woman pouring water on the titular figure and making him disappear, whereafter she (literally) picks up his mantle and herself becomes Satan.[105] Renderings of Satan as female are not that common in nineteenth-century visual art, though there are examples like Fidus's *Satana* (1896).[106] More frequent are somewhat androgynous or feminized Satans, like that painted by Antoine Wiertz in the triptych *Le Christ au tombeau* ('Christ Entombed', 1839). A typical literary example of this feminized Devil can be found in the short story 'Aut Diabolus aut Nihil' ('The Devil or Nothing', 1894) by the pseudonym X.L. (Julian Osgood Field), where he is described as 'apparently twenty, tall, as beardless as the young Augustus, with bright golden hair falling from his forehead like a girl's'.[107] These girlish features can perhaps be related to the connection between the Devil and male homosexuality that can often be found in the nineteenth century (see chapter 8).

Unsurprisingly, Satan as a woman was also employed in the discourse of Demonized feminism. A prominent American feminist who became the target of this was the Spiritualist, 1872 presidential candidate (!) and proponent of 'free love' Victoria Woodhull (1838–1927). She and her sister had opened a successful brokerage firm on Wall Street, which resulted in headlines like

‘The Bewitching Brokers’. In a caricature published in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1872, she was portrayed as ‘Mrs. Satan’, who tempts women by brandishing a placard proclaiming ‘Be Saved by Free Love’ (figure 2.6). In the background of the image, a wife burdened (literally—she carries them on her back) by three children and a drunken husband answers in the caption: ‘Get thee behind me, (Mrs.) Satan! I’d rather travel the hardest path of matrimony than follow in your footsteps.’[108] There might seem to be a certain doubleness in this drawing. Mrs. Satan looks undeniably strong and free, while the agonizing marital life that is ostensibly celebrated appears quite off-putting.

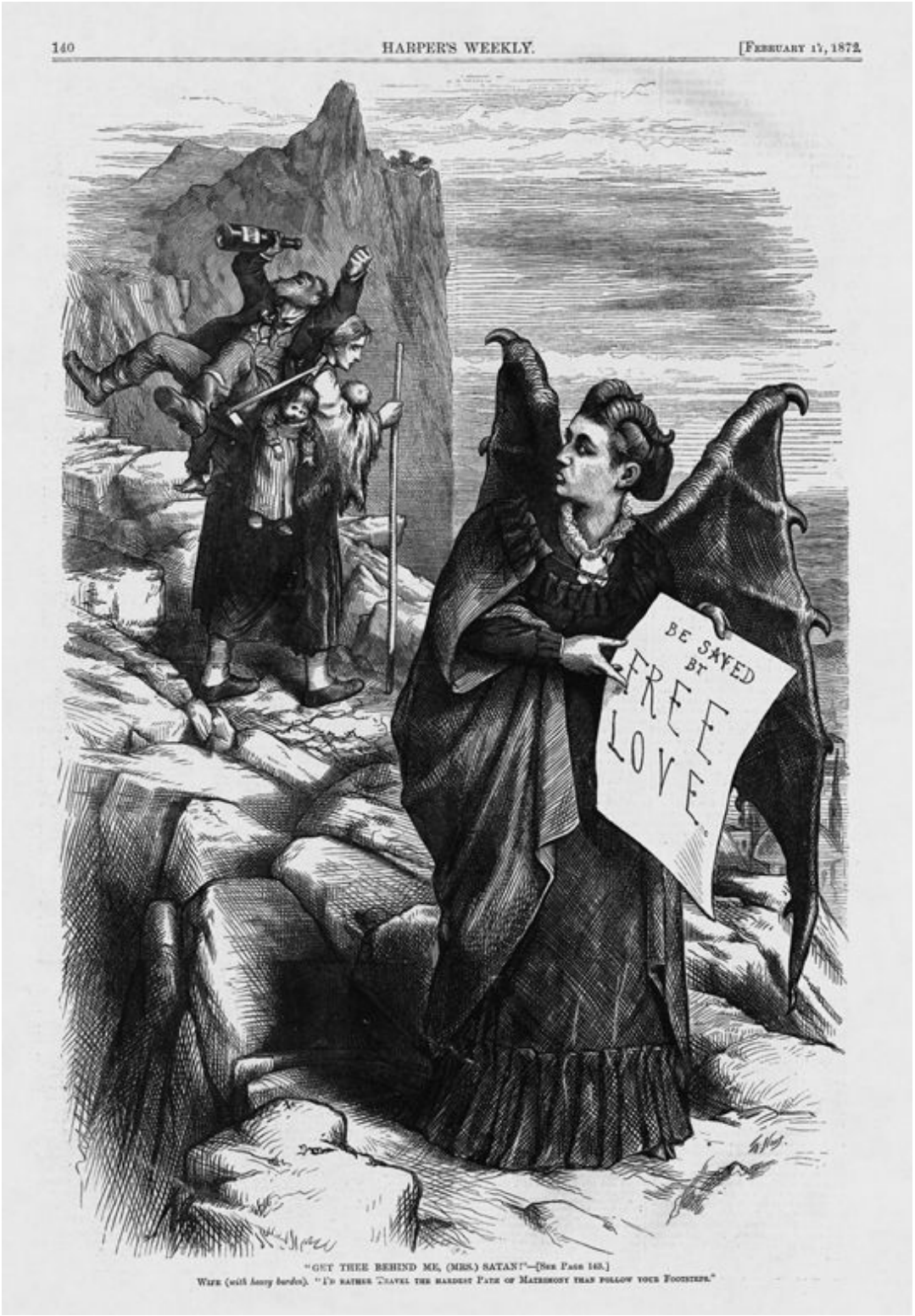
140 HARPER'S WEEKLY. [FEBRUARY 17, 1872.
BE SAVED BY FREE LOVE.
"GET THEE BEHIND ME, (MRS.) SATAN!"—[SEE PAGE 143.]
WIFE (with heavy burden). "I'D RATHER TRAVEL THE HARDEST PATH OF MATRIMONY THAN FOLLOW YOUR FOOTSTEPS."

FIGURE 2.6 Feminist Victoria Woodhull caricatured as Mrs Satan by Thomas Nast in *Harper's Weekly*, 17 February 1872.

BREASTS AND BEARD: BAPHOMET, HERMAPHRODITE ICON OF TRANSCENDING DUALITY

Female characteristics in depictions of Satan also feature prominently in an esoteric context, a fact we will return to several times throughout the study. This primarily relates to the hermaphrodite figure Baphomet, one of the central symbols of Satanism during the last hundred years or so, which has its immediate origins in French occultist Éliphas Lévi's engraving of it and the elucidation of its symbolism in his book *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* ('Dogma and Ritual of the High Magic', 1855) and elsewhere. However, the name first came to prominence in the 1307–1312 trials against the Knights Templar, a Christian monastic military order that fought in Palestine during the crusades and also pioneered an early form of banking all over Europe. On the initiative of King Philip IV of France, the Templars were accused of apostasy and heresy. King Philip happened to owe the Templars large sums of money, which probably contributed to his eagerness to act against them. In 1312, the order was dissolved and many of its members suffered harsh punishments. The charges included having worshipped a demonic idol, which in the confessions of the Templars—exacted under torture, or under threat of it—was described in a variety of manners: a head with horns or four feet, a skull or a wooden sculpture, and so on. According to some of those charged, its name was Baphomet. The confessions grew gradually more spectacular: the head was anointed with the fat of barbecued infants, female demons sometimes appeared at the secret ceremonies dedicated to it and had intercourse with the Knights, the Devil was their lord and saviour and they had to spit, urinate, and trample on the crucifix. There is little reason to believe there was any truth whatsoever to these allegations.[109]

When Freemasons, in an early phase of the development of their system, started searching for suitable predecessors among medieval knights, the Templars were given a prominent position in this supposed lineage, but they were seen as innocent martyrs and benevolent keepers of esoteric secrets rather than Satanists. Enemies of Freemasonry also soon seized on this supposed connection, but emphasized the sinister aspects of the alleged Templar (pre-)history of the fraternities. This legacy of conspiracy theories concerning Freemasons is alive even today, and Baphomet often plays a major part. In 1818, the Austrian orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall published the lengthy article 'Mysterium Baphometis Revelatum' ('The Mystery of Baphomet Revealed') in an orientalist journal, where he claimed that the

Templars really did revere Baphomet, but that this was an androgynous entity of pre-Christian origin, whose name referred to the Gnostic baptism of the soul.[110] Some of Hammer-Purgstall's ideas became quite influential, among them the notion of Baphomet as a gender-transgressing entity. This at times merged with the diabolical connotations of the figure, producing a sort of intersex Satan. The most significant example is in the aforementioned book by Lévi, and some other texts by him.

Lévi, born Alphonse-Louis Constant in 1810, was an eccentric character, who in his youth started studying to become a priest, but soon revealed himself as a troublemaker by becoming involved in socialist and feminist politics. Although there are no definitive indications of this, his hermaphrodite Baphomet might possibly have something to do with his early feminist sympathies.[111] Lévi's enormous impact on esotericism all over the Western world is indisputable, and influential later authors like H. P. Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley are heavily indebted to him. It was he who popularized the word *occultism*, as an *ism*, and his books were instrumental in bringing about the 'occult revival' of the mid- and late nineteenth century. Lévi's Baphomet is a symbol of synthesis and transcendence of polarities, such as spirit and matter.[112] He explained that the figure was indeed celebrated by the Templars and represents a pantheistic depiction of what he called the 'astral light'.[113] This phenomenon, one of the most complex in Lévi's muddled and abstruse system, is a substance that permeates the entire universe and mediates between spirit and matter. It is known under many names, for example, Lucifer and the Holy Spirit. This was what God created with the words 'Let there be light', Lévi claims.[114] In other words, the astral light is identified with Lucifer (among other things), and Baphomet as portrayed by Lévi clearly draws heavily on images of the Prince of Darkness presiding at the witches' sabbath in early modern treatises on witchcraft.[115] The Devil card in some tarot decks dating as far back as to the fifteenth century also strongly resembles Lévi's image, including the breasts.[116] His Baphomet, then, was modelled on older depictions of the Devil, even if it was meant to symbolize Lévi's concept of a morally neutral cosmic force.

However, Lévi is adamant about there being no conscious entity named Satan, only misuse of the astral light, which, when temporarily used for evil ends, becomes 'Satan'. This force (the astral light) is, he explains, 'the instrument of all good and all evil', while the Devil, to him, 'is the force

temporarily put to the service of that which is wrong'.[117] Satan, in short, is not some sort of dark anti-god or sentient personage, but in fact, as Lévi explains in several of his books, a cosmic force that was created for a good purpose, even if it can also be put to wicked uses. The identification of said force with the Holy Spirit complicates matters somewhat, but goes to show that Lévi's worldview had no room at all for a spirit of evil and that he strove (not always successfully) to overcome spiritual dichotomies and dualistic tendencies. These esoteric intricacies aside, Lévi's Baphomet soon became appropriated simply as a guise of Satan, and it is in this capacity that it appears, for example, in the prankster Leo Taxil's works of anti-Masonic conspiracy theory published in the 1880s and 1890s, which he later revealed were an elaborate parody of this genre (but which were fully believed by scores of people, including high-ranking officials in the Catholic Church).[118] As will be seen, the hermaphroditic nature of Lévi's Baphomet was of some consequence to the feminization of Satan in the late nineteenth century (figure 2.7).

FIGURE 2.7 Éliphas Lévi's engraving of the hermaphrodite Devil-figure Baphomet. Lévi was a prime instigator of the late nineteenth-century occult revival and one of the first esotericists to ascribe positive functions to Satan. From *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (1855).

'HER FATAL EMBRACE': THE DEMONESS LILITH IN JEWISH MYSTICISM AND FOLKLORE

While Satan could be female or hermaphroditic, he could also have a wife, who according to certain accounts was called Lilith. This demonic woman, whom some would eventually come to regard as the first feminist, has a long history. Raphael Patai and others have theorized that she has her roots in

ancient Sumeria.[119] As Gideon Bohak points out, regardless of where she began her sinister career, Lilith became 'part and parcel of Jewish demonology already in the Second Temple period' (530 B.C.–70 A.D.) and has 'remained there ever since'.[120] A female night spirit called Lilith appears in the Talmud and is described as having a woman's face, long hair, and wings.[121] The brief mention of Lilith in Isaiah 34:14 is perhaps not really a reference to this figure, but rather a misunderstanding of a Hebrew term denoting an unclean animal.[122] The Lilith we encounter in later narratives has been perceived as a solution to a seeming contradiction in the Bible, since in Genesis 1:27 we read: 'So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.' A little while later, however, in Genesis 2:21–22, it is stated that Eve was created after Adam, out of one of his ribs. In other words, the Bible offers two conflicting versions of the creation of woman. If Adam had a wife before Eve, this discrepancy would be solved: enter Lilith.[123] But what happened to the first wife? Classical Midrashic texts mention an unnamed 'First Eve' who returned to the dust she was made from, but do not elaborate on the motif. Daniel Boyarin suggests this fragmentary notion may reflect a longer narrative from that period, which is lost to us. This, he admits, remains on the level of mere conjecture and the figure is not called Lilith in the Midrash.[124] The Talmud refers to very old ideas about 'Lilin' and 'Lilioth', male and female demons of the night, and in *Genesis Rabbah* (written not later than 425 A.D.) it is said that since Adam and Eve did not lie with each other for 130 years after having been expelled from the Garden of Eden, they were visited by female and male sexual demons, respectively. Later, the focus would be shifted to how Adam was supposedly molested by the lecherous first Eve, Lilith, during this period. Boyarin comments: 'A gender-neutral statement of how demons exploit celibates has become by a subtle shift a representation of demonic female sexuality.'[125]

The oldest existing written source of most of the more developed legends concerning Lilith seems to be the story about her told in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, an anonymous work in Hebrew, possibly written as early as the eighth century.[126] Scholars have been uncertain what to make of the *Alphabet*. Historically, it has been received as everything from a serious halakhic source worthy of reverence, though this was rare indeed, to a burlesque parody of rabbinic hagiography.[127] Considering the ribald content the latter seems more

plausible, and David Stern has convincingly demonstrated its parodic nature. In order for such a parody to be funny, an extensive familiarity with rabbinic literature and its conventions is necessary, and it is important to remember that parody serves not only to mock and subvert, but also to reinforce cultural norms, in this case rabbinic self-identity.[128] Whatever the genre in which the text was originally written, and regardless of its author's intentions, its Lilith narrative came to influence both Jewish folklore and central mystical writings, including the *Zohar*, the thirteenth-century text that is usually considered to be the most influential Kabbalistic work.[129]

According to the *Alphabet*, Lilith and Adam were not a happy couple, since Lilith refused to lie beneath her husband when they had intercourse. She considered herself his equal, since they were both made from the earth, and refused to submit to him in this manner. Lilith then uttered the secret name of God and flew off to the Red Sea. God sent three angels after her, but she refused to return. The angels consequently threatened to drown her. She argued that she was created to cause sickness to infants, and made a deal with God's messengers to harm no child who is protected by the names or images of the angels. This last part of the tale sets out to explain the already widespread Jewish practice of hanging amulets with the names of these three angels around the necks of newborns.[130] To give some sense of the type of burlesque and bawdy context Lilith's tale is embedded in, it can be mentioned that her story is immediately followed by an account of how Ben Sira cures Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, who 'expels a thousand farts every hour'.[131] In spite of this, the tale of Lilith contains misogynist statements of a decidedly serious nature. As Judith R. Baskin points out regarding the argument between Adam and Lilith about who should be on top during intercourse, '[w]hile this may have been meant on one level to amuse and titillate the readers of this racy and subversive satirical work, it also draws upon the strong rabbinic statement … that defends the male dominant position in intercourse, as in married life, as a prerequisite of man's primacy in creation'.[132]

Two main versions of the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* exist. It seems that the idea of Lilith having copulated with a demonic force ('the Great Demon') first appears in the later edited and enlarged one, known in Europe since the eleventh century. This idea was inserted to explain why Lilith could not simply be forced to return to Adam when the angels came to retrieve her, something that would have baffled readers of the earlier version. Had Lilith been defiled through intercourse with another, she would not be able to return

to her husband, according to the teachings of the Torah. Hereby, a gap in the story's logic was filled, and a later editor of the text gave the name Samael to 'the Great Demon', since this was the only demonic name associated with the events in the Garden of Eden.[133] The theme of Lilith as Samael's wife was current in Kabbalistic circles in the Middle Ages and was further elaborated in several seventeenth-century works stemming from this milieu.[134]

According to a long-standing Jewish tradition, Lilith is a threat to males who go to bed alone, and Rabbi Hanina, a first-century A.D. teacher, warns men of sleeping alone in a house, lest Lilith get hold of them.[135] These ideas evidently had a long life. A similar warning, which additionally mentions the danger she poses to infants, can be found in a text written around 1,500 years later, in 1544, by Venetian Rabbi Eleazar the Great to his son: 'Do not leave an infant in his cradle alone in the house by day or night, nor pass thou the night alone in thy abode. For under such circumstances, Lilith seizes man or child in her fatal embrace.'[136] It is notable that the *Zohar* emphasizes the sexual element in the relationship between man and demons, and many details are very similar to the beliefs about succubi and incubi among Christian medieval demonologists (discussed later in this chapter). Gatherings of demons and witches (female and male) 'near the mountains of darkness where they have sexual intercourse with Samael' are also mentioned, which strongly resemble the concept of the witches' sabbath in Christian culture.[137] Given the apparent importance attached to sexuality in Jewish demonology, it is unsurprising that Lilith too was sexualized. In later times, however, Lilith lived on primarily as a figure perceived by tradition-bound Jews to be a threat to newborns. Aside from using amulets, they would draw a circle on the wall in male children's room and write within it 'Adam and Eve. Out Lilith!' The door of the room would be inscribed with the names of the three angels.[138] Such practices have been amply documented throughout the centuries, and belief in Lilith the child-killer persisted at least until the late nineteenth century in traditional Jewish communities.[139]

'EVER SINCE THE DAYS OF EDEN': LILITH AMONG THE GENTILES

Quite early, Lilith started making occasional appearances in gentile texts. St. Jerome (ca. 347–420), for example, notes that the Roman vampire creature Lamia is called Lilith among the Jews, and Peter Comestor's (d. 1173)

Historia Libri Genesis also mentions her.[140] In a *Fastnachtsspiel* (secular carnival play) from 1480, the Devil's mother or grandmother is named Lilith.[141] She later shows up in Johannes Wier's *De praestigiis daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis* ('On the Illusions of the Demons and on Spells and Poisons', 1563), Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), and Johannes Praetorius's *Anthropodemus Plutonicus* (1666). Praetorius describes her, among other things, as a demoness and a child-murderer.[142] A more lengthy exposition appeared in orientalist Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's influential anti-Semitic book *Entdecktes Judentum* ('Judaism Revealed', 1700), which was translated into English in 1732.[143] Around the same time, other works also discussed the legend, and she is described as Adam's first wife and a killer of infants in, for example, the French Benedictine Dom Calmet's *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testaments* ('Literal Commentary on all the Books of the Old and New Testaments', 23 volumes, 1707–1716).[144] In volume 17 of Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Großes vollständiges Universal-Lexikon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* ('Large Complete Universal Lexicon of All Sciences and Arts', 1738), there is a lengthy entry on Lilith as demoness, vampire, seductress, and first wife of Adam.[145] Lilith never became part of mainstream Christian teachings, but was absorbed into the folklore of several European countries.[146] Arabic folklore and demonology also adopted the Lilith figure, but gave her the name Karina or Tabi'a.[147]

Lilith truly entered the public mind of gentile Europe through the writings of Romantic authors who were fascinated by this ancient femme fatale. Her first noteworthy appearance in literature was in Goethe's play *Faust* (1808), where the title character and the Devil-figure Mephistopheles encounter her at the witches' sabbath at Brocken Mountain. Faust asks who she is and receives the following explanation from his companion:

> Adam's first wife.
> Beware of her beautiful hair,
> Of this ornament, with which she solely parades.
> If she with it gains the young man,
> She does not promptly let him go again.[148]

Faust then dances with Lilith, and says to her:

Once I had a beautiful dream;
There I saw an apple tree,
Two beautiful apples glistened on it,
They enticed me, I climbed up.

She answers:

The little apples you desire
And did already in Paradise.
I feel moved by joy,
That my garden too produces such.[149]

It is logical that Goethe emphasizes a connection between Lilith and the Fall, as temptation is a major theme in *Faust*. The brief meeting and conversation with her is unrelated to the main narrative, and Lilith's debut in the Western literary canon is decidedly a minor bit part. As we shall see, however, this tiny detail—in one of the play's more colourful scenes—would capture the imagination of important later figures. Through Goethe, Lilith became a recurring motif in visual art. An early example is English artist Richard Westall's *Faust and Lilith* (ca. 1831), which shows a pallid Lilith dancing with Faust in the moonlight, surrounded by bizarre creatures. More depictions of her will be discussed in chapter 7.

Lilith played a surprisingly small role in non-Jewish esotericism prior to the mid-twentieth century. She was, of course, well-known in this milieu, and many prominent writers in the field, like Éliphas Lévi, briefly discussed the legend in their books. Viewing her in a positive light or invoking her in a ritual context was, however, more or less unheard of at the time. She seems to have had no practical function, neither positive nor negative, in any nineteenth-century gentile esoteric system. Lévi's depiction of Lilith draws on Kabbalistic sources, but, as always, he also adds some imaginative material of his own. His interpretation of the figure and her sister Naamah seems mostly to focus on them as an allegory of the necessity of marital fidelity, or perhaps on the startling metaphysical consequences of infidelity.[150] Both readings are plausible, and they need not be mutually exclusive. The Theosophical guru H. P. Blavatsky regards Lilith as a symbol of animal females who mated with human men (Adam). This union resulted in the race of half-men known as satyrs, which is the origin of present-day apes

(Blavatsky rejected Darwin's theory of evolution).[151] It must be said that Lilith as the great-grandmother of the apes is considerably less lofty and impressive than most artistic renderings of her from the period. Such a deflating attests to Blavatsky's famously wry sense of humour. The well-known English occultist Aleister Crowley, also a great humourist, named his first child Lilith (the girl's full name was Ma Ahathoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith Crowley), but did not really incorporate the figure in his esoteric system.[152] In his occult works, she is mentioned only briefly, for example, in *De Arte Magica* (1914), when Crowley discusses how sexual acts involving emission of semen attract spirits.[153]

Lilith makes fleeting appearances in various other esoteric texts from this period as well, but never as anything more than a subsidiary character, and never as an entity that is invoked. For instance, Lilith is referred to as the mistress of Lucifer (and an aspect of him) in the pamphlet *Den ny morgens gry* ('The Dawn of a New Morning', 1906) by the Danish Luciferian Ben Kadosh, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Since it propagates esoteric Satanism and Lilith is tied to the figure the pamphlet celebrates, she can be said to receive (indirect) praise here—perhaps for the first time in an esoteric context.[154] Arthur Edward Waite's (1857–1942) many books on the history and doctrines of esotericism were written in a scholarly style and did much to establish a canon of sorts for source texts of this type. In his books focusing on Kabbalah (1902, 1913), he provided fairly detailed summaries of what the *Zohar* has to say about Lilith, with Waite highlighting especially her relationship to Samael and her function as a negative mirror image of the benevolent divine feminine.[155] Waite's books were widely read, and along with the writings of Lévi (many of whose works Waite translated into English) they likely contributed significantly to making gentile esotericists aware of Lilith. Non-esoteric scholarly and popular overviews of Jewish folklore should naturally also be taken into account when it comes to the spread of her fame in such circles, as well as among the general populace at the fin-de-siècle.[156]

'PROTOMARTYR OF FEMALE INDEPENDENCE': LILITH BECOMES A FEMINIST ICON

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Lilith had turned into something of a feminist symbol, but without losing her connection to the Devil. Several examples of this will be discussed in chapters 7 and 8. In this period, critical

scholarly and popular studies of Jewish and Christian ideas as pure mythology had started appearing en masse. These tended to point out inconsistencies in such tradition and theology, often with a rather caustic attitude, and sometimes sided symbolically with Satan and his cohorts. This was mainly a product of the authors' sympathies for progressive ideas and science, which had both been tied to the demonic by Judeo-Christian tradition. For this reason, Lilith could also be turned into a heroine. For example, in Moncure Daniel Conway's *Demonology and Devil-lore* (1878, second revised and enlarged edition 1880), we find a write-up of Lilith, 'this infernal Madonna', as the first feminist, a 'protomartyr of female independence'.[157] In a bantering manner, Conway describes how Eve was created only after Lilith's flight from paradise due to Adam refusing his first wife equality. Eve was fashioned 'out of Adam's rib in order that there be no question of her dependence, and that the embarrassing question of woman's rights might never be raised again'.[158] He goes on to tell of how Lilith, after spurning the male chauvinist Adam, became the wife of Satan/Samael, wherefore 'we may suppose that Lilith found him radical on the question of female equality which she had raised in Eden'.[159] Satan is, in other words, portrayed as a feminist sympathizer, whose enlightened attitude stands in sharp contrast to 'the combined tyranny of God and man'.[160]

It should be noted that Conway himself, as can be seen in his autobiography, had been largely sympathetic towards female emancipation since at least the 1850s and also associated with suffragettes like Elizabeth Cady Stanton of *The Woman's Bible* fame (see chapter 4).[161]Originally a Christian minister, he had left Christianity in favour of an anthropocentric form of transcendentalist free thought.[162] Conway's feminist stance becomes completely clear in his *Demonology* book when he writes of 'man who now asserts over woman a lordship unnatural and unjust' and lays down that '[w]hen man can make him a home and garden which shall not be a prison, and in which knowledge is unforbidden fruit, Lilith will not have to seek her liberty by revolution against his society'.[163] He also dryly points out that '[l]ike Lilith, women became devil's brides whenever they were not content with sitting at home with the distaff and the child'.[164] Finally, he provides the following assertion, that would turn out to be quite prophetic: 'Had there been an order of female rabbins [*sic*] the story of Lilith might have borne obvious

modifications, and she might have appeared as a heroine anxious to rescue her sex from slavery to man.'[165]

Another depiction of Lilith as a proto-feminist (aided in her emancipation by Satan) is Ada Langworthy Collier's (1843–1919) book-length poem *Lilith: The Legend of the First Woman* (1885), which her contemporaries considered to be the author's greatest work.[166] The title character defiantly says to Adam:

> Must I, my Adam, mutely follow thee?
> Run at thy bidding, crouch beside thy knee?
> Lift up (when thou dost bid me) timid eyes?
> Not so will Lilith dwell in Paradise.[167]

At this point, Lilith is decidedly not a rebel against God, in fact claiming she cannot submit to Adam because 'Unto our Lord I own / Allegiance true; my homage is his alone'.[168] She claims that God urged them: 'Bear equal sway / O'er all that live herein'.[169] In her opinion, it is Adam who breaks this compact with God. All the same, after Lilith's flight from her obstinate male chauvinist husband she ends up in an intimate relationship with Satan (who goes by his Islamic name Eblis).[170] He paraphrases the Miltonic Lucifer's speech about making a Heaven of Hell by saying 'where thou art, I know / Is Heaven'.[171] In seeming contradiction to Lilith's obvious knowledge of God (and how he fashioned the world) at the beginning of the poem, she asks Satan who created the wondrous things the world contains, and he answers: 'My foe / He was—he is'.[172] She hesitates to throw in her lot with Satan, afraid to lose her independence once again, and tells him 'Like Adam, thou / Perchance will seek to bind the loosed'.[173] He assures her that is not the case, and to prove the truth of his words engraves them in stone, whereafter they are wedded.[174]

As time passes, Lilith develops a consuming longing for children and grows jealous of Eve, who has begotten a young one by Adam. Satan decides to still this longing by reawakening her hatred for the tyrant Adam, showing a dark side to his—in most other respects—seemingly gentle and loving personality:

> Safe won, then shall she ever be mine own.
> Soul-bound to me in hate, more terrible than death

In hate, that long outlasts Love's puny breath—
O cunning craft, that with the self-same blow
Forever wins my love, and smotes my foe![175]

As things turn out, Lilith ends up stealing Eve's child.[176] When later on the child falls ill she decides to return it, hoping its mother can make it well again.[177] Lilith the child stealer is not really a wicked creature in the poem, merely sad and driven to a desperate act by her unfulfilled motherly love.

Collier's poem is provocative both in its portrayal of Satan as an advocate of equal rights—who is additionally ultimately motivated by his love for Lilith as much as by his hatred of God—and in making a heroine of Lilith in her striving for gender equality. Lilith can never have that with Adam, God's chosen one. Satan, however, happily and ungrudgingly grants it to her, turning him as well as Lilith into feminist role models of sorts. He even engraves his promise of equality between the sexes in stone. Judging by the impassioned rhetoric against male supremacy Lilith is allowed to sprout when she questions Adam's authority, it would seem that Collier's own sympathy indeed lies with the feminist cause. This is, however, difficult to know for sure as biographical data on her is scant. She came from a rich family, grew up in a mansion in Dubuque, Iowa, and attended school until the age of seventeen (an unusually comprehensive education for a woman at the time). She was married at age 25 and bore one son. Since girlhood, she wrote for various periodicals, contributing sketches, tales, and poems. Moreover, she published several novels.[178] While there is no definitive evidence of feminist sympathies on her part, this seems highly likely in view of the ponderings presented in her *Lilith*.

Not only supporters of female emancipation picked up on this specific allegorical use of Lilith. Howard Glyndon (Laura C. R. Searing, 1840–1923), in her poem 'The Loosing of Lilith' (1871), uses Lilith as an image of everything that is wrong with the rebellious women of her own time. In the first stanza, Lilith says to God: 'Let me wander upon the earth, / To teach new ways to the women there / Who are weary of home and hearth'. The author then bitterly ascertains:

And her image, it multiplieth fast,—
Too fast for the pace of the world;
And Lilith meets you at every step,

Ribboned and creped and curled.
Her marks are a sceptical, brazen brow,
And a hard and a glittering eye,
And a voice that striveth to fill the world
With its clamoring shrill and high.[179]

Nowhere before has the dimension of contemporary social and gender politics been quite so explicit in a depiction of Lilith. Her fate as an outcast ought to serve as a warning to all women, another stanza inculcates:

When the fire goes out on the hearth at home,
And the chamber is left unkept;
When a shadow that climbeth from heart to eye
Twixt husband and wife hath crept;
When the wife is shy of the mother's estate,
And maidens are counting the cost,—
It behooves us to think a little upon
The glory that Lilith lost.[180]

Finally, it is emphasized that when a woman rebels against patriarchy and social conventions, by not putting her duty towards her husband above all else, this equals defying God himself, rejecting Christianity, and teaming up with the powers of darkness:

If we go down to the root of the thing,
We shall see that they put Self first,
And that is the sin of sins, for which
Fair Lilith was greatly curst.
They are out of the shadow of the Cross,
And self is their idol in life,
And it is not the voice of God they hear,
But of Adam's demon wife.[181]

This was, of course, meant as a harsh condemnation and represents a textbook example of Demonized feminism. The ultimate point is that if we consider texts like those by Conway, Collier, and Glyndon, they all portrayed Lilith as a feminist figure (whether in a positive or negative manner).[182]

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, according to some folk beliefs recorded in the nineteenth century in Scandinavian countries (though probably reflecting a much older tradition, which was also likely widespread outside of Scandinavia) Satan can function as a helper of women when it comes to assisting with easing labour pains or getting rid of an unwanted child.[183] Help with the former of these problems, of course, was taboo-breaking not only due to the source of the relief but also because birth pains were part of Eve's punishment from God (Gen. 3:16), and thus something women should suffer, as a reminder of the first woman's transgression. Hence, for example, in Swedish folklore widely spread stories depict women who, by magical means, avoided the proper agony when giving birth and were punished with their sons becoming werewolves.[184] In Danish folklore, there are accounts that combine this admonishing tale with the statement that the method of pain relief involved an actual ritual evocation of the Devil.[185] Occasionally, the peasant population would view woman herself as inherently diabolical in a literal sense. One example is the notion in Karelian folklore that Satan created the female sex organ by cleaving woman between the legs with an axe.[186] The actual practice of making explicit pacts with the Devil (a phenomenon that was, in fact, surprisingly common in some times and places), however, was a male domain, at least as something exercised in reality by the populace.[187]

The early modern accusations against witches, as formulated by the learned authorities, typically included allegations of entering into a compact with the Evil One—and witch persecutions, as is well known and accepted by all scholars of the subject, were predominantly aimed at women, with at least 75% of the accused being female in most regions of Europe.[188] Whether misogyny was the actual cause of this apportion is hotly debated, though. The statistics are clear on one count: a witch could be male, and in Russia and Estonia they even constituted a majority of the accused. These two countries are nevertheless anomalies, and the typical witch was female almost everywhere else in Europe. We can note, however, that a large number of witnesses in the trials were also women, and some scholars have suggested that many accusations originated in tensions among women themselves.[189] Marianne Hester has quite convincingly argued against this as somehow deflecting blame from males and making the matter a problem between

women. Rather, she writes, we should see it 'as an outcome of a wider patriarchal context', where 'women are often placed in the position of moral gatekeepers who socially control other women' due to 'various ideological, material and psychological pressures on them to do so'.[190]

The idea of a secret society of witches who were Devil worshippers in formal league with Lucifer developed slowly in the mid-fourteenth century. It can subsequently be seen clearly expressed in a letter from Pope Eugenius IV (in office 1431–47) to his inquisitors.[191] Persecutions of putative witches came in waves. France and Germany experienced an intense period of persecutions in the 1480s and a couple of decades onwards, followed by a second onset around 1560, which also spread to Switzerland and England. At the turn of the next century, there was another outbreak, which now also involved Flanders and Scotland, and then a final wave around 1620, which ravaged large parts of Europe until the final quarter of the century. After this, only occasional persecutions are recorded, among them the famous 1692 trials in Salem, Massachusetts, which were among the last in the Western world. The considerable regional variations have made it difficult to find all-encompassing explanations.[192]Yet, as Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen have contended, the European witch persecutions have so many shared traits —for example, that they occurred between 1450 and 1750, were based on a coherent theological and judicial doctrine, and that the majority of the accused were women—that they must be seen as a more or less uniform phenomenon.[193] Even so, it is best to bear in mind Robin Briggs's wise words: 'Any attempt to suggest that there is a single cause, or even a dominant one, a hidden key to the mystery, should be treated with the greatest suspicion.'[194] Misogyny, then, cannot be seen as such a key, either; but it still appears reasonable to consider negative attitudes towards women in the time period—learned as well as popular—an important piece of the puzzle.

The general view in the early modern era of women as overtly passionate, wanton and unpredictable probably helped create a widespread anxiety that they were more likely to have been recruited into the secret Satanist sects that were rumoured to exist.[195] In medieval and early modern times, the notion of women as characterized by carnality and great sexual appetite was pervasive, and only in the eighteenth century did the idea that they were sexually passive begin to gain ground. Secular judges and religious authorities on witchcraft concurred that women turned to worshipping the Devil precisely because of their hunger for carnal pleasures, a craving that could be satisfied to the

fullest at the orgy-like witches' sabbath.[196] The typical witch's confession was surprisingly fixed and stereotypical throughout the entire period and in all countries. It included the individual having celebrated the so-called sabbath (the word, of course, indicates an overlap with anti-Semitic slander) where she or he, along with other witches, performed ritual acts inverting normal, Christian behaviour, for example, dancing backwards or bending their heads upwards instead of downwards to show respect. In short, the sabbath, as imagined by the learned, constituted a form of counter-world, a space where everything was turned upside down.[197] One of these inversions was that the alleged cult was run largely by women, instead of male priests as would be the case in Christian churches.

It is important to remember, as Marianne Hester underscores, that at least one among several important aspects of the early modern belief in witchcraft was its function as 'a gendered ideology serving the interests of men within patriarchal relations'. However, she comes dangerously close to proclaiming a monocausal explanation in her assertion that the witch-hunts primarily belong to the category of 'mechanisms for social control of women', in particular those who did not comply 'with the ideal of the quiet and compliant wife'.[198] Indeed, it is easy to see—in accordance with Hester's argument—how the image of the witch is a complete inversion of the ideal good Christian wife and mother, and the persecutions of witches thus served to uphold conventional standards of proper conduct for women.[199] All the same, I would be unwilling to go quite so far as to reduce them to this and little more. Nonetheless, at least one simple fact that Hester states is difficult to argue against, no matter which one of the multitude of theories about the complex causes of the early modern witch hunts one might subscribe to, namely that '[i]t was men who stood to gain by the linking of witchcraft and "the female" because it provided them with a greater moral and social status than women'.[200]

The development of printing at the end of the fifteenth century fuelled belief in Satanic witch cults, since trial records could now rapidly be spread among the learned and used in new interrogations and trials. Various manuals for witch hunters were also produced. Statements supporting the manuals' characterizations of the supposed sect of witches now became seen as the desirable thing to force from the lips of the accused, since the descriptions in the manuals were considered the established facts about how witches acted. Hereby, new and self-confirming additions to the genre were continually

created. Writers could then claim that the strong similarities between cases constituted proof that dangerous Satanists were working their mischief all over Europe.[201] In later times, the most famous of these printed works has no doubt been the *Malleus Maleficarum* ('The Witches' Hammer', 1486), essentially a manual for detecting and prosecuting witches, and a rebuttal of scepticism against their existence. It was written by two German inquisitors of the Dominican order, Henricus Institoris (Heinrich Kramer) and Jacobus Sprenger (Jakob Sprenger).[202] As we will see, this manual is often referred to by feminists when they are critiquing Christianity as evil and patriarchal. Some historians, however, have questioned how central the role of the book really was. According to H. C. Erik Midelfort, the text's misogyny and fixation with magic causing male impotence was never fully accepted by theologians and judges, even if they considered the *Malleus* one of several informative works.[203] We should therefore be cautious about taking the ideas it presents as fully representative of learned opinions.

What, then, is the content that has made this work known as the early modern misogynist text par excellence? The book is surely permeated with hatred of women, but it is probably the colourful, horrifying, and at times quite ridiculous anecdotes and case histories that have made it legendary. Among the most infamous is a recounting of how witches steal the sexual organs of men. According to Institoris and Sprenger, witches may keep as many as twenty or thirty stolen penises in a bird's nest or cabinet, where they move themselves like living members and are fed with fodder.[204]

The *Malleus* also contains a great amount of rather dry and pseudo-systematic rambling musings on woman's propensity to yield to Satan. It is explained that woman 'is evil as a result of nature because she doubts more quickly in the Faith' and she further 'denies the Faith more quickly, this being the basis for acts of sorcery'.[205] As proof of this, the authors quote various authorities and offer a crude folk etymology according to which the Latin word *femina* ('woman') is derived from *fides* ('faith') and *minus* ('less').[206] The previously mentioned contemporary view of woman as particularly filled with sexual lust is suggested as a further explanation: 'Everything [in woman] is governed by carnal lusting, which is insatiable in them … and for this reason they even cavort with demons to satisfy their lust.'[207] This is linked directly to the very manner in which God created woman:

> These defects can also be noticed in the original shaping of woman, since she was formed from a curved rib, that is, from the rib of the chest that is twisted and contrary, so to speak, to man. From this defect there also arises the fact that since she is an imperfect animal, she is always deceiving, and for this reason she is also deceptive.[208]

It is hardly surprising that in this chapter Institoris and Sprenger repeatedly bring up the serpent's seduction of Eve in the Garden of Eden to substantiate their claims. In her conversation with the serpent, they claim, Eve 'shows she is doubtful and does not have faith in the words of God'.[209] According to the two Dominicans, scripture has so many negative things to say—especially in the Old Testament—about women 'because of the first sinner (Eve) and her imitators', though in all fairness we should also mention that they then add that Mary has been instrumental in lifting the curse called down on us by Eve.[210] However, such positive words are effectively drowned in the raging flood of misogyny issuing forth from their pens, where Eve becomes the model for understanding all of her sex. They strongly stress Eve's instrumental role in the Fall of Man, stating that 'though it was the Devil who misled Eve into committing sin, it was Eve who led Adam astray' and her sin was therefore the decisive moment in the whole event.[211] Their ultimate conclusion is that womankind was created wicked, carnal, and weak, which is why women are so much more likely to be witches than men are. The inquisitors' reasoning connects this directly to Eve and her prototypical collusion with Satan.

This line of argument was far from unique. In the *Daemonologie* (1604) of King James VI of Scotland (later James I of England), it is stated about women that 'as that sex is frailer than men is, so is it easier to be intrapped in the gross snares of the Devill, as was well proved to be true, by the Serpent's deceiving Eve at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe ever since'.[212] Such references to Genesis 3 are common in literature of this type. However, the portrayal of women in general as inherently wicked was mostly a peculiarity of Institoris and Sprenger's book, whereas other similar works instead tended to emphasize woman's fundamental weakness, which had once made her succumb to the serpent's guiles.[213] The *Malleus* went through fourteen editions between 1496 and 1520, so it is safe to assume it was widely read, even if, as mentioned, its authority was far from indisputable.[214] It figures prominently in nineteenth-century discussions of witchcraft, thus being an important intertext for many of the sources used in the present study.[215]

DEMON LOVERS: FROM THE LUSTFUL WATCHER ANGELS TO INCUBI AND ROMANTIC HEROES

The emphasis that early modern authors like Institoris and Sprenger put on woman's carnality, and the resulting sexual relations between witches and Satan at the sabbath, has a long pre-history. In Genesis 6:1–8, it is mentioned that what later Christian tradition commonly identified as the 'Watcher angels', the *bene-ha elohim* ('sons of God'), were besotted with human women and begat children upon them. A detailed account of this union with wicked angels is to be found in the inter-testamental Apocalypse of Enoch (second century B.C., also known as Ethiopic Enoch and Enoch I). Here, the Watchers appear as a sort of rebel angels, 200 in number, led by a particularly wicked individual called Sâmjâza. The narrator states that their coupling with the daughters of men defiles the angels (but not the women, it would seem), and that the celestial womanizers instruct their human partners in spell-casting, cosmetics, and the use of herbs. The angels also teach mankind various technological skills—like metalworking, specifically for making arms, armour, and jewellery—but all this goes hand in hand with godlessness and corruption. This reflects a recurring motif in Jewish and early Christian writings where technological progress is bound up with demonic forces, and cultural heroes tend to be portrayed as sinister. Interestingly, one of the Watchers, Gâdreêl, is identified in this work as the creature that led Eve astray.[216] In the Apocalyptic apocryphal text The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (ca. 109–106 B.C.) it is claimed that the women actively seduced the Watchers, thus shifting the blame to lustful females rather than evil angels. This notion is the probable explanation for Tertullian's admonition to women that they should cover their heads, lest angels once more be seduced by their beauty.[217]

The distinction between canonical writings and apocryphal or pseudoepigraphical texts like these was not clearly established in the time of the earliest Christians, and they hence influenced not only writers like Tertullian but contributors to the New Testament as well. Allusions to the Watcher myth can be found, for example, in Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4. This myth blended into understandings of the Fall of Man in Genesis 3 and helped sharpen the misogynistic edge of some interpretations of it.[218] It is also notable that Eve's encounter with the serpent quite early on was read as an erotic scene of seduction, in parallel to the Watchers' debauchery with human women. What is probably the first textual evidence of this can be found in the

Apocalypse of Moses (ca. 1st century A.D.).[219] Tertullian (who claimed that Cain was in fact the Devil's son, in an allegorical sense) and many later Christian thinkers also added sexual innuendos to the serpent's temptation of Eve.[220]

The story of the Watchers, although it is non-canonical in its more elaborate form, was known among Christians in later periods as well. For example, William Blake produced the drawing *Two Watchers Descending to a Daughter of Man* (ca. 1820s) and Lord Byron adapted the tale in his play *Heaven and Earth* (1821). Artists of the same period who were not properly part of the Romantic movement but who also took an interest in this narrative include Blake's lifelong friend, the highly successful neoclassicist John Flaxman (1755–1826), as can be seen in his drawing *Angels Descending to the Daughters of Men* (ca. 1821). The tale of the Watchers was thus disseminated quite widely during the Romantic era.[221] 'Demon lovers', in a broader sense, had been a popular motif for a long time. It was widespread in English ballads, with one early example recorded in the middle of the sixteenth century.[222] In many legends about King Arthur's magically proficient companion Merlin, for instance, one dated to ca. 1300–1325, the sorcerer's father was said to be a demon.[223]

As Nicolas Kiessling describes, there were antecedents and parallels to these sexual demons in both Graeco-Roman and Germanic tales, as well as a rich tradition of this kind in Jewish lore, for example, Kabbalah. All of this influenced Christian thinkers. Around A.D. 1100 what can be called the 'incubus dogma' had thus become an accepted part of the orthodox Christian worldview. It was held that demons—called an incubus when assuming the shape of a man and having sex with a woman, and a succubus when in the guise of a woman seducing a man—were quite eager to make love to humans in order to ruin their souls. Folk traditions, or rather a learned need to deal with folklore's problematic stories of otherworldly paramours, may have been an important factor in making this motif a legitimate topic of theological discussion in Europe around this time. Perhaps these demons were also a convenient scapegoat for adulterous wives, or nuns, who became pregnant. Only towards the end of the sixteenth century was the belief in sexual demons seriously challenged.[224]

The human party in tales where a supernatural creature seduces or is seduced by a mortal was not necessarily female. There are many stories of men—including virtuous figures like St. Anthony—receiving such visitations

from the otherworld as well. Usually, the supernatural lover is sinister, but this is far from invariably the case. The division between demonic and non-demonic entities is not always clear, and in some literary works dealing with the motif, like Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* ('The Devil in Love', 1772), the reader is kept in uncertainty until the final chapters. Later fiendish Gothic villains, like the one in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), are clearly modelled on older ideas about demons seducing women and represent sexuality at its most destructive. There are also several decidedly more morally ambivalent characters patterned on the incubi and succubi of yore, like Théophile Gautier's vampire lady in 'La Morte amoureuse' (1836) and the secularized demon lover Heathcliff in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Such literary reworkings are analysed in detail in chapter 5.

CONCLUDING WORDS

As this chapter has shown, the misogynist tradition of emphasizing woman's special connection to Satan is very old, and prevalent throughout Western culture, 'high' and learned as well as 'low' and popular. There are, I would propose, three identifiable main types of female figures in close relationships with Satan: (1) Eve: the prototypical first female transgressor, who succumbs to temptation and hubris; (2) The witch: a sinister rebel against proper womanhood and member of a Satanic cult that inverts the values of Christian society; (3) The demon's lover: erotically involved, voluntarily or not, with the Devil or his demons. All three stereotypes frequently overlap. For example, women's supposed insatiable carnality leading them to have intercourse with demons was a central part of early modern discourse on the reasons why women were more prone than men to become witches. Another instance of this overlapping is how Eve's collusion with Satan in the Garden of Eden is consistently used as an explanatory myth of origins concerning woman's evil or inferiority in general, and—at least as long as belief in an external Satan was universally strong—her proclivity to consort with the powers of darkness in particular.

Satan was not only conceptualized as particularly alluring to women, but was also feminized himself. This was especially widespread in pictorial and dramatic renderings of the Fall of Man, as well as grotesque depictions of hermaphrodite Satans. It can furthermore be seen in nineteenth-century esotericism in the shape of Baphomet, the male-female, human-animal symbol

of transcending all dualities. This figure became a common rendering of Satan in esotericism and popular culture. The Devil card in many tarot decks is also iconographically similar, with woman's breasts. Satan's spouse, the rebellious Lilith, is a concept from Jewish lore, and therefore only a minor motif in gentile contexts. Nevertheless, she was quite clearly an opponent of patriarchy in some of the traditional tales, and hence came to be incorporated into the broader discourse here designated Satanic feminism.

Nineteenth-century feminists often felt they somehow had to deal with male chauvinists' use of the story in Genesis 3. One way of doing so, which seems to have been quite widespread, was to turn the tale on its head, making Eve a heroine and the serpent benevolent. The present study tells the history of how this type of tactic—a counter-hegemonic interpretation, or counter-reading—was also used to subvert various other aspects of the mythology of woman as Lucifer's confederate. Hereby, Devil-worshipping witches were turned into champions of science and women's rights, Lilith became a feminist role model, demon lovers were portrayed as allies in the struggle against patriarchal oppression, and so on. Typically, those striving to overthrow male dominance through such symbolic resistance worked with an extensive awareness of the long cultural tradition surrounding women and the Devil, and repeatedly made use of motifs from the reservoir described and discussed in this chapter. At times, the references are implicit and subtle, which is why a reasonable level of knowledge of the contents of the reservoir—hopefully provided by this chapter—is a prerequisite to comprehending much of what we will encounter ahead.

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[1] The most in-depth overview of the development of the figure of Satan is Jeffrey Burton Russell's four-volume study (1977, 1981, 1984, 1986). It is, however, seriously flawed and biased in its treatment of twentieth-century Satanism (1986, pp. 253–257), as well as slightly inexact when it comes to literary Satanism (1986, pp. 168–213), and should not be consulted in these specific matters. Even so, it is unparalleled as a broad treatment of the cultural history of Satan. Darren Oldridge's *The Devil: A Very Short Introduction* (2012) is a useful condensed account, as are Russell's summaries of his larger work in *The Prince of Darkness* (1988) and his chapter in the collection *The Satanism Scare* (1991). Robert Muchembled's essayistic *Une histoire du diable: XIIème–XXème siècle* (2000) is not fully recommendable, in spite of the author's at times gleaming erudition, and must be employed with caution due to the often subjective and imprecise writing style. An older work that is filled with interesting material—but which can at times be inaccurate and is lacking in references—is Maximilian Rudwin's *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (1931). It too can only be used with circumspection.

[2] Russell 1986, p. 172.

[3] Russell 1977, pp. 189–190.

[4] Evans 1968, p. 34; Russell 1977, pp. 198–200; Russell 1981, pp. 27–29.

[5] Telford 2009, pp. 91–92.

[6] Russell 1977/1987, p. 121.

[7] Evans 1968, p. 34; Russell 1977/1987, pp. 195–197. Cf. Medway 2001, pp. 53–54.

[8] Oldridge 2012, p. 27.

[9] Ibid., pp. 8, 31.

[10] Ibid., p. 29. For a general discussion of the evolution of dualist tendencies, see Stoyanov 2000.

[11] Wolf-Knuts 1991, pp. 286–287; Wall 1992, p. 32.

[12] Russell 1986, pp. 26, 30, 53–54.

[13] Oldridge 2012, p. 35.

[14] Russell 1986, p. 260; Oldridge 2012, pp. 40–45.

[15] At least, there is no reliable documentation of actual Satanism (in the *sensu stricto* delineated in the introduction chapter) until the late nineteenth century. For fairly complete surveys of Satanism—and ideas about Satanism—prior to 1966, see Faxneld 2006a; Faxneld, forthcoming a. See also the annotated anthology of primary sources in Faxneld & Nilsson, forthcoming b. A benchmark-setting recent study of nineteenth-century (literary) Satanism and conspiracy theories concerning Satanism is Luijk 2013. The two most important older studies of the topic are Schmidt 1992 and Introvigne 1994/1997. On later developments (i.e. Satanism after the founding of LaVey's Church of Satan in 1966), see Faxneld & Petersen 2012c, pp. 6–8; Petersen 2005. For an exhaustive overview of research on contemporary religious Satanism, see Petersen 2011, pp. 23–32 (and the shorter counterpart in Faxneld & Petersen 2012c, pp. 8–10). The words *Satanism* and *Satanist* (in the contemporary sense of people actually venerating the Devil in some way), or their equivalents in other European languages, are not very old, and only became used to any greater extent in the second half of the nineteenth century (Medway 2001, p. 9; but see also Häll 2012, pp. 26–28, for a Swedish example predating this by a couple of hundred years). The concept they denote, however, is considerably older.

[16] Medway 2001, pp. 70–99; Faxneld 2006a, pp. 1–21, 62–84, 125–134. On the French seventeenth-century abortionists and poisoners, see also Somerset 2003; Luijk 2013, pp. 58–69.

[17] For a well-argued problematization of such a straightforwardly orthodox reading of Milton, see Forsyth 2003.

[18] Faxneld 2011c; Faxneld 2013a.

[19] Faxneld 2006a, pp. 177–188. In my 2006 book, I argued that the early Fraternitas Saturni should be labelled Satanists, but having read more of their material from the 1920s and 1930s I am no longer quite so sure about this. An excellent recent discussion of their teachings can be found in Hakl 2013.

[20] Hakl 2008, pp. 465–474; Faxneld 2006a, pp. 189–194.

[21] Faxneld 2011c. See also Faxneld 2013c on Satanism and the construction of tradition.

[22] Havrelock 2011, p. 17.

[23] For example, Charless Ess holds this view. Ess 1998, p. 92.

[24] Moberly 1988, p. 1. Many others have also emphasized the enormous impact of this Bible passage, e.g. Evans 1968, p. 9.

[25] Mettinger 2007, p. 27.

[26] The tale in Genesis 6, about human women procreating with angels, can be seen as a further example of not respecting the division between divine and human realms. We will return to this story.

[27] Cf. Moberly 1988, pp. 7–8; Evans 1968, pp. 18, 20.

[28] Warner 1976/1985, p. 269.

[29] For examples of non-negative serpents in the Bible, see Exod. 4:1–5; John 3:14.

[30] Moberly 1988, p. 13.

[31] Evans 1968, p. 88. On a possible origin of the Edenic serpent motif in what Mettinger calls the 'chaos battle mythology', see Mettinger 2007, pp. 82–83.

[32] Higgins 1976, p. 647.

[33] The order of the argument is reversed here, but the argumentation itself is not affected by this. Paul further refers to Adam being created first as another reason why men should rule over women.

[34] There are, of course, also several passages in the Bible that can be used to support feminist arguments, e.g. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:21; Acts 2:17–18.

[35] Bassler 1988, p. 45; Phillips 1984, p. 121. At least, this theory did not become widely accepted outside specialist circles until long after the mid-1930s, which is when I draw the line for this study.

[36] Rogers 1966, p. 11. New Testament professor Jouette Bassler proposes that the social context behind the phrasing in 1 Tim. 2 is that of women of the time having proved more susceptible to heretical teachings (with Eve being easily led by the serpent used here to symbolize this), wherefore it seemed unwise to allow them to hold positions of authority in the church. Bassler 1988, pp. 50–51.

[37] Phillips 1984, p. 134.

[38] Kvam, Schearing, & Ziegler 1999, p. 319. See further chapter 3.

[39] For a critique of the notion of Gnostic radical dualism, see Williams 1996.

[40] Russell 1981, p. 83. For an important problematization of the term *Gnosticism*, see Williams 1999, who proposes that 'biblical demiurgical traditions' would be a more appropriate label.

[41] Dunderberg 2011, p. 389. On the serpent as malevolent in Gnostic texts, see also Rudolph 1977/1987, pp. 104–105, 145–147.

[42] Dunderberg 2011, pp. 391–392. See also Rasimus 2009, who argues that these texts should be considered Ophite rather than Sethian.

[43] Rudolph 1977/1987, p. 367; Hedrick 1986, p. 3. Some have wanted to see a direct continuity between Gnosticism and dualistic heresies in the Middle Ages like the Cathars. This question must be considered unresolved.

[44] Quoted in Evans 1968, p. 66.

[45] Phillips 1984, pp. 16, 21–22.

[46] Ibid., p. 51.

[47] Rogers 1966, pp. 14–15.

[48] Quoted in Church 1975, pp. 84–85. Different translations can be found in Kvam, Schearing, & Ziegler 1999, p. 132; Warner 1976/1985, p. 58.

[49] Church 1975, pp. 86–87. Even so, Tertullian was decidedly far from a champion of women's rights in any modern, secular sense. Ibid., pp. 92, 100.

[50] Prusak 1974, pp. 100–101.

[51] Quoted in Kvam, Schearing, & Ziegler 1999, p. 113.

[52] Augustine 1988, p. 331.

[53] Quoted in Evans 1968, p. 97 (from *De genesi ad literam* XI.30). However, Evans underscores that Augustine did not, at the end of the day, view Eve's transgression as greater than Adam's. Evans 1968, p. 97.

[54] Ess 1998, pp. 100–102. Quote on p. 102. See also ibid., p. 116, for a problematization of some of these simplifications of Augustine's ideas.

[55] Quoted in Phillips 1984, p. 58. On the parallel to Augustine, see Evans 1968, p. 96.

[56] Phillips 1984, p. 99. For the relevant extract from Luther, see Kvam, Schearing, & Ziegler 1999, pp. 267–273.

[57] Phillips 1984, pp. 104, 106.

[58] Ibid., p. 105.

[59] Russell 1980/2007, p. 116. We should here bear in mind Russell's considerable pro-Catholic bias, however.

[60] Quoted in Rogers 1966, p. 70.

[61] Milton has not always held this status. In the late eighteenth century, for example, he could be regarded as a populist alternative to the classical tradition. Craciun 2003b, p. 699.

[62] Milton 1941, pp. 313, 314.

[63] Ibid., pp. 301–302.

[64] Ibid., pp. 315, 318, 319.

[65] Patrides 1966, p. 105.

[66] Frye 1965, p. 77. However, Frye's analysis as a whole is far from pro-Satanic or "revolutionary" in spirit, and he stresses the shallowness of Satan's arguments that Eve make her own, since the former 'can only understand ruling and serving, and prefers reigning in hell to serving in heaven' (an attitude Frye clearly disproves of). Ibid., p. 64.

[67] Milton 1941, p. 238.

[68] Ibid., p. 239.

[69] Steadman 1965, pp. 569, 573.

[70] Milton 1941, p. 239.

[71] Ibid., pp. 318, 319.

[72] Ibid., p. 321.

[73] Ibid., p. 321.

[74] Ibid., p. 155.

[75] Schiller 1790, p. 6: 'ohne Widerspruch die glücklichste und größte Begebenheit in der Menschengeschichte'.

[76] Phillips 1984, p. 78.

[77] Schiller 1790, p. 5: 'machte er sich auf den gefährlichen Weg zur moralischen Freiheit'; 'Unwissenheit und Knechtschaft'.

[78] Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p. 196.

[79] Ibid., p. 202.

[80] Ibid., p. 201.

[81] Ibid., p. 206.

[82] Ibid., p. 210.

[83] Ibid., p. 205. Their fascination with Satan as a symbol of liberation is not without some hesitation, however. For an interesting problematization of women using Satan as an emblem of emancipation, focusing on 'the difficulty of direct identification with the assertive Satanic principle', see ibid. pp. 206–207.

[84] Froula 1983, pp. 329, 343.

[85] Shullenberger 1986, pp. 78, 70.

[86] Ibid., p. 78.

[87] Russell 1981, p. 23. See also Russell 1984/1986, pp. 77, 149. The theological argument referred to has been put forward by many thinkers. One example is the influential scholar Michael Psellos (1018–1078), who states that demons are able to assume the form of either sex, but do not have a fixed sex themselves. Russell 1984/1986, p. 42.

[88] Russell 1984/1986, pp. 130, 211.

[89] For some examples of hermaphrodite depictions of Satan, see Ward & Steeds 2007, pp. 176, 224; Lehner & Lehner 1971, p. 18; Morgan & Morgan 1996, pp. 55, 160; Giorgi 2003/2005, p. 244; Grambo 1990/1992, p. 25.

[90] Russell briefly discusses this motif (Russell 1984, p. 211), but does not seem to take note of the fact that its prevalence in actuality challenges his statement about how representations of Satan are gendered. Marina Warner, in complete contradiction, states flatly that '[i]n iconography, Satan is often female'. She also mentions an interesting feminizing of Satan in a text by Ignatius of Loyola. Warner 1976/1985, p. 58.

[91] Trapp 1968, pp. 262–263.

[92] Phillips 1984, p. 62. It is unclear whether Phillips here refers to St. Jerome's Vulgate (late fourth century), or the partial Latin translations which preceded it. Incidentally (or perhaps not so incidentally), there is also a possible etymologic link between the Hebrew word for Eve, *Hawwah*, and the word for serpent in Aramaic and Arabic. Norris 1998/1999, p. 318.

[93] Bonnell 1917, pp. 257–258; Evans 1968, p. 170. Quote from Norris 1998/1999, p. 319.

[94] Quoted in Bonnell 1917, p. 260.

[95] Quoted from the 1971 edition of William Caxton's translation, first published in 1484 (Caxton 1971, pp. 62–63). For an analysis of Eve in Geoffrey's book, see Norris 1998/1999, pp. 282–283.

[96] Bonnell 1917, pp. 255–257. For a list and discussion of mystery plays where the stage directions mention the serpent having a woman's head, see Bonnell 1917, pp. 278–288. On the female Satan on stage, see also Evans 1968, pp. 195–196.

[97] Phillips 1984, p. 62; Norris 1998/1999, p. 319.

[98] Bonnell 1917, pp. 275–276. As Trapp points out, this figure is even more distinctly womanly than its predecessors. Trapp 1968, p. 252.

[99] Kelly 1972, p. 319.

[100] Bonnell 1917, pp. 276–278. For a long list of further examples in visual art, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, see Bonnell 1917, pp. 265–278; Kelly 1972, pp. 316–319. It has been suggested some of these may depict Lilith (see the section later in this chapter on this figure), but Bonnell states that he has found no medieval evidence of her having been thought of—or represented—as a woman-snake hybrid. Bonnell 1917, p. 290.

[101] Kiessling 1977, p. 50.

[102] Rudwin 1931/1970, pp. 52–53.

[103] Quoted in Kiessling 1977, p. 68.

[104] On the female Satan in folklore, see e.g. Odstedt 1943/2012, p. 200.

[105] This film was made in Paris, during the time Chomón worked for the Pathé Frères film studio.

[106] In chapter 4, I will briefly discuss a Theosophical feminization of Satan.

[107] X.L. [1894]/1895, p. 56.

[108] Johnston 1967, pp. 57, 141; Goldsmith 1998, pp. 328–329.

[109] Cohn 1973/2000, pp. 79–101; Barber 1994/1996, pp. 289–300.

[110] Barber 1994/1996, pp. 309–313, 320–323; Partner 1987/1993, pp. 78, 89–180. In fact, the etymological origins of Baphomet likely lie in an Old French corruption of the name Muhammed, as it was believed the Templars had become "infected" with Islamic idolatry while in the Holy Land (Cohn 1973/2000, pp. 79–101; Barber 1994/1996, pp. 309–313, 320–323). For an amusing example of later conspiracy theories concerning a supposed link between Freemasonry, Baphomet, and Satanism, see the hilariously paranoid cartoon booklet *The Curse of Baphomet* (Chick 1991), a so-called Chick tract (one of a plethora of small-format comics published by the American conservative Christian Jack T. Chick).

[111] On Lévi's involvement with feminism, see Luijk 2013, pp. 149–150, 152. The section on Lévi in Ruben van Luijk's dissertation (pp. 148–167) is the best discussion so far of how the French occultist related to the figure of Satan.

[112] Faxneld 2006a, pp. 105–106. For biographical background on Lévi, see McIntosh 1972/1975; Luijk 2013 (esp. pp. 148–149); Strube 2016.

[113] Lévi [1859]/n.d., p. 219.

[114] Faxneld 2006a, p. 103.

[115] Cf. image in Carus 1900, p. 291. We should note in this context that Lévi at times differentiated between Satan and Lucifer as different figures.

[116] Giorgi 2003/2005, p. 244.

[117] Lévi [1854]/1930, p. 290: 'l'instrument de tout bien et de tout mal'; 'c'est la force mise pour un temps au service de l'erreur' (cf., however, Lévi [1859]/n.d., p. 193, where he emphasizes that the Devil should be understood not as a person nor a force, but rather in terms of personal morality, as a weakness—'une faiblesse'). See also Lévi 1860, pp. 13–19. Lévi here (p. 19) identifies the astral light with the serpent that functioned as the transmitter to Eve of the words of a fallen angel. Exactly what this fallen angel is supposed to be if Satan is the astral light itself (when used for evil), here symbolized by the serpent, remains—like so many other things in Lévi's system—unclear.

[118] Medway 2001, pp. 9–17; Faxneld 2006a, pp. 125–126; Luijk 2013, pp. 241–323.

[119] Patai 1967/1990, pp. 221–222. Cf. Scholem 1974, p. 356.

[120] Bohak 2008, p. 300.

[121] Baskin 2002, pp. 58, 181.

[122] Blair 2008, pp. 31, 237–238. Even if the passage would in fact allude to Lilith, there is nothing to link the figure to later ideas about her. Moreover, we should note that in several influential Bible editions the name Lilith is not used, so the Bible would not have done as much as could perhaps be expected to spread her fame among gentiles (Liptzin 1985, p. 2). Some Bible translations (e.g. the KJV) have replaced the word *Lilith* with 'screech owl'.

[123] Baskin 2002, pp. 56–57; Dan 1980, p. 20.

[124] Boyarin 1993, p. 95.

[125] Ibid., p. 96.

[126] Baskin 2002, p. 58; Dan 1980, p. 20.

[127] Stern 1990, p. 21.

[128] Stern 2004, pp. 426, 447–448.

[129] Gershom Scholem proposed that the *Zohar* ('Splendor') was most likely written by Moses de Leon in Spain during the thirteenth century and pointed out the *Zohar*'s debt to the *Alphabet* (Scholem 1941/1946, p. 174). More recent scholarship instead holds the *Zohar* to be an anthology of late thirteenth and early fourteenth century texts. On this, see Meroz 2000.

[130] A translation of the *Alphabet* can be found in Stern & Mirsky 1990, pp. 169–202 (the story of Lilith on pp. 183–184). It is Scholem who states that the practice with amulets to ward off Lilith was already widespread, and that the *Alphabet* simply tries to explain it. Scholem 1974, p. 357.

[131] Broznick, Stern, & Mirsky 1990, p. 184.

[132] Baskin 2002, p. 59.

[133] Dan 1980, pp. 20–22. On Samael, see Scholem 1974, pp. 385–388; Dan 1980, pp. 19–20.

[134] Patai 1967/1990, pp. 244–246, Dan 1980, pp. 18–19. The first time that Lilith is described as the wife of Samael in a dated Jewish work is in Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen's *A Treatise on the Left Emanation*, composed in Spain during the second half of the thirteenth century. Rabbi Isaac's revolutionary contribution consisted in creating 'a demonological parallel structure of evil emanatory powers ruled by Asmodeus, Satan, Lilith, and their hosts, deriving from the left side of the sefirotic tree'—i.e. a radical dualism hitherto not present in Jewish mysticism. Dan 1986, pp. 36–37.

[135] Patai 1967/1990, pp. 223–224, 232.

[136] Quoted in Klein 1998, p. 147.

[137] Scholem 1974, pp. 322–323.

[138] Patai 1967/1990, p. 240.

[139] Umansky 1987, p. 555; Yassif 2002, p. 245; Klein 1998, p. 155.

[140] 'et lamiam quae Hebraiae dictur Lilith'. Quoted in Liptzin 1985, p. 4.

[141] The play deals with the supposedly female pope Jutta (Johanna) and was printed in 1565, though the publisher claims it was written in 1480. Scholem 1974, p. 358.

[142] Jacoby 1987, p. 1304; Krebs 1975, pp. 150–151; Burton 1883, p. 115.

[143] Liptzin 1985, p. 4.

[144] Uitti 1958, pp. 479–480.

[145] Roebling 1989, p. 192.

[146] See e.g. Ek-Nilsson 2008, pp. 58–60, 62; Ek-Nilsson 2010, pp. 46–47; Ohrt 1917, p. 466.

[147] Scholem 1974, p. 357. For an interesting, though partly outdated, discussion of charms against the child-stealing witch—a category the author includes Lilith in—in various cultures, see Gaster 1900.

[148] Goethe 1958, p. 210 (lines 4119–4123): 'Adams erste Frau. / Nimm dich in Acht vor ihren schönen Haaren, / Vor diesem Schmuck, mit dem sie einzig prangt. / Wenn sie damit den jungen Mann erlangt, / So läßt sie ihn so bald nicht wieder fahren'.

[149] Goethe 1958, p. 211 (lines 4128–4131; 4132–4135): 'Einst hatt' ich einen schönen Traum; / Da sah ich einen Apfelbaum, / Zwey schöne Äpfel glänzten dran, / Sie reizten mich, ich stieg hinan'; 'Der Äpfelchen begehrt ihr sehr / Und schon vom Paradiese her. / Von Freuden fühl' ich mich bewegt, / Daß auch mein Garten solche trägt'.

[150] Lévi 1860, p. 438.

[151] Blavatsky 1888a, p. 262. She presents a different but likewise negative interpretation of Lilith elsewhere in the same book (p. 285).

[152] Kaczynski 2002, p. 107.

[153] Crowley & Reuss 1999, p. 389.

[154] Kadosh 1906, p. 25. Interestingly, Kadosh also argues that 'Venus, Woman, is merely a Phase or other Side of Lucifer, quite similar to him, as if though created from his Element'. ('Venus, Kvinden, er kun en Fase eller anden Side af Lucifer, ganske lig ham, som skabt ud af hans Element.')

[155] Waite 1902, pp. 81–82, 255, 259–260; Waite 1913, pp. 85–87, 103–104.

[156] E.g. Baring-Gould 1871, pp. 3, 20–21; Ginzberg 1913, pp. 65–66. Both strongly emphasize Lilith's relationship to Samael/Satan.

[157] Conway 1880, pp. 302, 100.

[158] Ibid., p. 94.

[159] Ibid., p. 95.

[160] Ibid., p. 302.

[161] Conway 1904, vol. 1, pp. 289–290, 449–451. On his association with Stanton, see pp. 285–286. It should be noted that in spite of a generally pro-feminist attitude, Conway voices some apprehensions about female suffrage. This, however, is caused primarily by his general elitism, as he declares that 'the masses of men are unfit to vote' and he fears that unworthy males (e.g. domineering parsons) might influence women to make uninformed choices should they get the vote. He does not seem to say women are inherently less intelligent or able to make rational political choices, but that they are, lamentably, often under an overbearing influence from males in the context of the present patriarchal order (p. 286).

[162] Burtis 1952, pp. 176–177. On the writing of *Demonology and Devil-lore* and its reception, see pp. 176–180. It is interesting to note that Conway later gave a lecture entitled 'The New Prometheus', where religious freethinkers of his own kind were likened to the Greek Titan (incidentally, or perhaps not, also commonly conflated with Satan in the nineteenth century). Ibid., p. 191.

[163] Conway 1880, p. 104.

[164] Ibid., p. 101. Conway also shows sympathy for Eve's fruit-eating, describing how she was 'prepared to take her intellectual rights from the Serpent if denied her in legitimate ways'. In this, he also sees a

parallel to conditions in his day and age: 'The question is, indeed, hardly out of date yet when the genius of woman is compelled to act with subtlety and reduced to exert its influence too often by intrigue' (p. 103).

165 Ibid., p. 96. Five decades later, another scholar followed in Conway's footsteps, again providing a positive academic evaluation of Lilith's merits. In his often quoted and information-filled (but frequently unreliable) classic, which remains a useful starting point for inquiries into the topic, *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (1931), Maximilian Rudwin devotes an entire chapter to Lilith. He writes that Lilith 'was the first to claim that woman was essentially man's equal and left her husband on account of his old-fashioned ideas about the husband's right to be head of the family' (Rudwin 1931, p. 127). Just like Conway, Rudwin also details how Lilith apparently found Satan/Samael to have a better attitude towards the equality of the sexes, wherefore she married him. Referencing Conway, he almost reproduces his words verbatim when sarcastically describing Jehovah's hopes that after the replacement of Eve for Lilith, 'the embarrassing problem of women's rights might never be raised again among men'. He adds insult to injury by appending a sarcasm of his own: 'Evidently Jehovah with all his omniscience could not foresee the widespread suffragist movement of the present day' (p. 97). Another parallel to modern times is drawn when Rudwin likens Lilith's decision to leave her tyrannical husband to that of Nora in Ibsen's controversial play *Et dukkehjem* ('A Doll's House', 1879) (p. 96).

166 Willard & Livermore 1893, p. 192.

167 Collier 1885, p. 15.

168 Ibid., p. 18.

169 Ibid., p. 21.

170 Ibid., pp. 37–39.

171 Ibid., p. 38.

172 Ibid., p. 49.

173 Ibid., p. 53.

174 Ibid., p. 54.

175 Ibid., p. 68.

176 Ibid., p. 83.

177 Ibid., pp. 90, 93.

178 What little information there is comes from an 1893 biographical lexicon of American women. Willard & Livermore 1893, p. 192.

179 Glyndon 1921, p. 101. The poem was first published in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1872.

180 Ibid., p. 102.

181 Ibid.

182 Another indication that this was a fairly widespread view of the figure can be found in a letter that was in Gabriel Dante Rossetti's possession (but not addressed to him) from one Ponsonby A. Lyons, who responded to a query about Lilith from the editor of the conservative journal *Athenaeum*. The letter is dated November 18, 1869, and can thus not have influenced Rossetti's famous poems or painting depicting Lilith (see chapter 7), but is all the same a fascinating documentation of views of her among the intelligentsia and artists of the day. Lyons explains that Lilith was 'the first strong-minded woman and the original advocate of woman's rights'. Allen 1984, p. 292.

[183] Wolf-Knuts 2000, pp. 75–107; Wall 1992, pp. 24–27.

[184] Odstedt 1943/2012, pp. 163–168.

[185] Ibid., p. 164.

[186] Wolf-Knuts 2000, p. 96.

[187] Wall 1992, pp. 24–27.

[188] Levack 1987/1995, pp. 133–135; Scarre & Callow 2001, p. 57; Hanegraaff 1995, p. 217. Hanegraaff mentions in passing that he believes the cross-cultural nature of belief in witches being women sufficiently disproves the notion of misogyny in Catholic theology as a cause of the witch persecutions, an argument I do not quite agree with. It is fully possible that similarly misogynist ideas in the theologies (or mythologies) of other cultures could have functioned in the same way, which would hardly disprove the importance of Catholic theology in the European case. That said, my objection is more of a formal nature, as I concur with Briggs's scepticism towards monocausal explanations, and think it unlikely that Catholic (or Protestant) theology is more than one of several factors.

[189] Levack 1987/1995, pp. 140–141.

[190] Hester 2002, p. 282.

[191] Oldridge 2002, p. 4.

[192] Ibid., pp. 4–5.

[193] Ankarloo & Henningsen 1987, p. 18.

[194] Briggs 1996, p. 51.

[195] Scarre & Callow 2001, pp. 60–61.

[196] Levack 1987/1995, pp. 137–138; Hester 2002, p. 280.

[197] Rowland 1987, pp. 145–152.

[198] Hester 2002, pp. 276, 279.

[199] Other scholars have also stressed this dimension of the trials, e.g. Levack 1987/1995, p. 156; Coudert 2008, p. 232.

[200] Hester 2002, p. 280.

[201] Klaits 1985, p. 12; Oldridge 2002, pp. 17–18.

[202] The authorship of the *Malleus* has been debated, and some have proposed that Institoris was the sole author. Christopher S. Mackay has convincingly argued against this. Mackay 2006, pp. 103–121.

[203] Midelfort 2002, pp. 115–116; Kieckhefer 1989/2000, pp. 196, 198.

[204] Institoris & Sprenger 2006, vol. 2, p. 280. All quotes are from Christopher S. Mackay's 2006 translation. It is worth noting that Institoris and Sprenger are adamant that the penises are not actually separated from the body, but can neither be seen nor touched simply due to an illusion created by the Devil. The witch's collection of stolen members moving about of their own accord is hence also an illusion (p. 276).

[205] Ibid., pp. 117–118.

[206] Ibid., p. 117.

[207] Ibid., p. 122.

[208] Ibid., p. 117.

[209] Ibid., p. 117.

[210] Ibid., p. 116.

[211] Ibid., p. 121.

[212] Quoted in Denike 2003, p. 12.

[213] Oldridge 2002, p. 271.

[214] Russell 1980/2007, p. 92.

[215] Most English-speaking feminists, Satanists and even non-specialist scholars discussing the *Malleus* during the last eighty years have referred to Montague Summers's rather unreliable and heavily abridged translation from 1928 (earlier studies had to be based on the original Latin versions, or the 1906 German translation), which has been reprinted numerous times. It was even published in a lavish illustrated edition by the prestigious bibliophile club the Folio Society in 1968. In 2006, a new, unabridged translation by Christopher S. Mackay was issued, and in 2007 an abridged translation by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart was published. These, however, seem to have had little influence outside academia so far. For the short discussion of some key motifs in the *Malleus*, I have used Mackay's translation. Even though Maxwell-Stuart's translation appears equally reliable, the completeness of Mackay's makes it preferable.

[216] Phillips 1984, pp. 46–47; Norris 1998/1999, pp. 85–88; Prusak 1974, pp. 90–91.

[217] Phillips 1984, pp. 49–50.

[218] Prusak 1974, pp. 96–97.

[219] Norris 1998/1999, p. 84.

[220] Prusak 1974, pp. 104–105.

[221] Phillips 1984, p. 48.

[222] Grudin 1987, p. 17. The three major studies of demon lovers in English and continental fiction (and its theological and folkloric antecedents) are Kiessling 1977, Grudin 1987, and Reed 1988. Studies focusing on this motif in religious discourses include Elliott 1999, Stephens 2002, and Maggi 2006.

[223] Kiessling 1977, pp. 49–50. The notion of sexual demons having their way with women was present already in Augustine's fifth century *De Civitate Dei* ('The City of God'), one of the most influential theological works ever written. It was subsequently used as support for such views by many later writers (e.g. Martin Luther). In Sweden, this was the case even in the early eighteenth century. Häll 2013, pp. 159–160, 467.

[224] Kiessling 1977, pp. 21–24.

Human rebellion ends in metaphysical revolution. It progresses from appearances to acts, from the dandy to the revolutionary.

ALBERT CAMUS, *L'Homme révolté* (1951)[1]

3

Romantic and Socialist Satanism

INTRODUCTION

This chapter treats the emergence and convergence of literary and political Satanism. More specifically, it deals with the theme of the heroic and benevolent Satan as it manifested in Romanticism (a term whose meaning will be discussed a bit further into the chapter) and later in socialism. The phenomenon of writers declaring themselves to be of the Devil's party first arose among German- and English-speaking Romantic poets in the late eighteenth century and would soon become observable all over the Western world. Some of the most influential poets of the age held such sympathies, and the theme was later picked up by prominent socialist writers, to whom the second half of the chapter is dedicated. Romantic and socialist Satanism, then, was anything but a marginal phenomenon, being both highly visible and stemming directly from writers that were among the most famous of their time. As will be demonstrated, literary Satanism had a political dimension from the very start, and subsequent use of Lucifer the liberator tends to draw on the early literary works, thus resulting in a circuitous relation between Satanic radicalism in the realms of poetry, prose, and politics. With two exceptions—a text by Percy Shelley and an anarchist periodical focused on female emancipation—a connection between Satan and feminism is rarely noticeable in this material, although the recurrent revaluation of the events in

Genesis 3 has implications for the role of woman in society. Much of the discussion in this chapter therefore serves primarily to sketch a background to the texts treated in the rest of the study, where this does become a major theme and for which the subversive foundations provided by the individuals and currents we will now consider constitute both sources of inspiration and an intertextual framework.

'A BEING OF CONSIDERABLE VIRTUE': MAKING A REVOLUTIONARY HERO OF MILTON'S SATAN

The point of departure for most use of Satan as a symbol of goodness in Romantic literature and political writings is John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) and its ambivalent portrayal of the Devil. In spite of a certain observable ambiguity in his character depiction, it is widely agreed that the author's intent was, as he himself declares, to 'justify the ways of God to men', and not at all to glorify Lucifer.[2] Milton was an active republican pamphleteer during the English civil war and worked as Oliver Cromwell's private secretary. This soon led to speculation whether Satan's rebellion against God (the ultimate monarch) in *Paradise Lost* was perhaps an allegory for the republican uprising against the king. Given the author's own political stance, this would indirectly make the fallen angel the hero of the piece.[3] The earliest explicit interpretations of Milton's Satan as fascinating or a hero, however, came about through writers focusing on the figure's 'sublime' character.[4] In his tremendously influential *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), Edmund Burke held up a description of Satan in *Paradise Lost* as one of the prime examples of the sublime. With regard to this passage in Milton's epic, he asks: 'In what does this poetical picture consist?' His answer is, among other things, 'the ruin of monarchs, and the revolutions of kingdoms'.[5] It is interesting to note that Burke, who played a prominent role in whipping up panic among his countrymen concerning the French Revolution, would later, in his bestselling *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, consistently tie the French insurgents to Satan.[6] The intention here was to denigrate the rebels against the crown, but if these polemics are read together with his verbose and enthusiastic words elsewhere describing Satan as sublime, the combined image becomes slightly odd. It is perhaps no wonder that others chose to view revolution as both Satanic and sublime at once, in a solely positive

sense that Burke had not intended. Contemporaries of his, like Mary Wollstonecraft and the German Romantic Novalis, even read *Reflections* like William Blake (more of whom presently) read Milton, feeling that the author was of the Devil's (here the revolutionaries') party without knowing it. Novalis sardonically opined that Burke had written 'a revolutionary book against the revolution'.[7]

Religious belief in Satan as a spiritual entity had not died out during the late eighteenth century, but it was certainly waning, especially among the educated classes. Now partly cut loose from his original Christian context, Satan could suddenly symbolize both good and evil things. The latter use of him, as a tool for the demonization of one's enemies, was naturally nothing new. Such tarring with the demonological brush could be meant quite literally, as it was during the reformation when Catholics described Martin Luther and his followers as the disciples of the Devil while the Lutherans proclaimed that the Pope was Satan's messenger on Earth.[8] The innovation that took place towards the end of the eighteenth century was that radicals demonized themselves, so to speak, in order to demonstrate their complete rejection of the Christian establishment. Their aim was obviously to provoke, perhaps also to frighten. Occasionally, they also seem to have wanted to ridicule the conservatives and their view of everything radical, subversive, and dissolving as de facto demonic.

As mentioned, some early readers had thought of *Paradise Lost* as an allegorical retelling of the English civil war, but that view did not really gain a foothold in the long run. However, Milton's Lucifer as a subversive political symbol made a grand return towards the end of the eighteenth century. In Schiller's play *Die Räuber* ('The Robbers', 1781), the heroic robber Karl Moor, in a republican and revolutionary conversation (which was deleted from the second edition of the play), describes Milton's Satan as one who can never submit to another. He then rhetorically asks: 'Was he not an extraordinary genius?'[9] In his *Selbstrecension der Räuber*, Schiller draws parallels between his hero and Milton's Satan. He also points out that we automatically sympathize with the loser, and hereby 'Milton, the panegyrist of Hell, for a moment transforms even the mildest of readers into a fallen angel'.[10] Goethe's poem 'Prometheus' (written in 1772–74, published 1789), in which the Greek Titan expresses his defiance of God (Zeus) and relishes

his own independence, displays a congruent spirit of rebellion against an oppressive divinity, but cloaks it in a less offensive Greek garb.[11]

We find the same tendency to religious insubordination among many authors in the United Kingdom. The unruly Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote 'Address to the Deil' [*sic*] in 1786, which is primarily a parody of Christian belief in Satan, which he finds singularly ridiculous. Although Burns (contrary to what Maximilian Rudwin claims in his classic study) does not really celebrate Satan here, but merely addresses him in a polite manner, he privately felt a strong sympathy for the figure, and identified with his outcast status. In a letter from April 1787, he wrote: 'I set as little by kings, lords, clergy, critics, etc. as all these respectable Gentry do by my bardship. … I am resolved to study the sentiments of a very respectable Personage, Milton's Satan—"Hail horrors! hail, infernal world!" ' In June the same year another of his letters contains the following appeal: 'Give me a spirit like my favorite hero, Milton's Satan.'[12] An equally strong sympathy for the Devil can be found in a text by one of the period's most well-known radical political thinkers: the novelist, journalist, and (proto-)anarchist philosopher William Godwin (1756–1836). In one of his main works, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), Godwin observes, '[P]oetical readers have commonly remarked Milton's devil to be a being of considerable virtue.' He then goes on to present his own view of this figure, which is also positive, to say the least, and is only moderated somewhat by the reservation that he begins his pondering on Satan's nature with: 'It must be admitted that his energies centered too much in personal regards.'[13] But why, Godwin goes on to ask,

> did he rebel against his maker? It was, as he himself informs us, because he saw no sufficient reason, for that extreme inequality of rank and power which the creator assumed. It was because prescription and precedent form no adequate ground for implicit faith.[14]

Godwin has here turned Satan into an embodiment of precisely the anarchist values he himself propagated. The rebellion against God turns into a reflection of his own hatred of illegitimate authority and inherited power. The reign of God becomes analogous to that of the despotic and arbitrary authority that he felt governed late eighteenth-century England in accordance with prescription and precedent. As Peter Schock points out, Godwin's reading of Milton is highly selective and ignores all the traits of Lucifer that he reasonably would not have appreciated at all, most noteworthy of which

is perhaps the fallen angel's authoritarian side. Schock further highlights the striking fact that Godwin does not seem to consider his opinions about the Devil to be particularly aberrant.[15] In other words, he wrote in a time when the symbolic valorization of Lucifer was probably part of the common discourse of at least his own clique of radicals.

The reader may recall from chapter 1 that Mary Wollstonecraft, who would later marry Godwin, wrote in a footnote to her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) of her dislike for the scenes of 'paradisiacal happiness' where Milton depicts the marital bliss of Adam and Eve and instead 'with conscious dignity, or satanic pride, turned to hell for sublimer subjects'. Her interest, she says, lies with the 'outcast of fortune, rising superior to passion and discontent', fallen women or widows who struggle to make it on their own.[16] My argumentation in the introduction against Gilbert and Gubar's reading of this as a sort of Satanic feminism can be extended to other scholars that have seen it in a similar way. For example, Peter A. Schock calls the passage a 'Satanic idealization of the victim of class-based and gendered oppression', while Ronald Paulson sees this as Wollstonecraft pronouncing that 'a wronged woman … in relation to men is a Satan to whom active evil is to be preferred to good. As widow—as mother in relation to her children—woman is a self-sufficient Satan who has no need for man at all'.[17] I remain unconvinced that this is the case. The passage could instead be read as a self-ironic apology for her idiosyncrasy ('satanic pride') in choosing to discard topics that would seem to be more "appropriate" for a woman of letters, or, more likely, a sarcastic comment on an expected outrage at her choice. The reference to Hell could be read as an allusion to her turning to hellish environments, like the London slum where some women's daily struggle takes place, to find the individuals she wants to bring to the fore. Regardless of how these lines are best understood as part of the text (and its context) that they are a footnote to, it is still possibly of some significance that a major feminist employs this type of symbolism and ascribes Satanic pride to herself. It is, then, fully possible that the scholars just cited are not the only ones to have read it as an expression of some sort of Satanic feminism, and it may therefore be a passage of certain historical consequence for our main topic.

Returning to Wollstonecraft's husband, we can ask why radicals of his kind appropriated Satan in this manner. Schock suggests motives analogous to those giving rise to the so-called blasphemous chapels that existed in

London during the end of the 1810s, where coarse agitators attacked the authority of Christianity with burlesque parody and vitriolic diatribes. They would accuse God of indifference towards the suffering of the poor, and such anti-sermons can be viewed as a means to erase the religious fear keeping the populace from rising up against its masters.[18] One London blasphemer felt, as Iain McCalman puts it, 'that the timidity, superstition and deference of the common people—learned from priests and patriarchs—had to be jolted out of them'. A government spy attending these meetings contended that such blasphemy made the ultra-radicals more inclined to drastic acts.[19] However, the fact that radicals like Godwin elevated Satan to heroic status, albeit admittedly merely *en passant* in a very long text focusing on other matters (it should be noted, though, that he also came to Satan's defence elsewhere), would seem to have played into the hands of their conservative enemies.[20] It appears doubtful whether it was really an effective strategy to try to counter the conservatives' demonization by whitewashing the demonic power that the radicals were often connected with in political caricatures. The examples of such vilification are numerous. For instance, the British government had spread, in newspapers and pamphlets, the image of revolutionary France as the Great Beast of the Book of Revelations.[21] Even more telling is James Gilray's 1798 etching *The Tree of Liberty*, where the progressive politician Charles James Fox (1749–1806), who sympathized with the revolution in France, is depicted as the serpent in the garden of Eden, offering an apple inscribed with the word *Reform*.[22]

English radicals, revolutionaries, and reformers in general did not side with Satan in any large-scale or consistent manner. They would just as often —more frequently, in fact—utilize a more easily handled negative Devil symbolism, where for instance the royal dynasties of Europe were portrayed as Satanic. Later, Napoleon was frequently rendered as an explicitly demonic figure by his detractors, in a type of smearing campaign that was time-honoured and hardly original.[23] The opposite goes for author, critic, and painter William Hazlitt's slightly bizarre 1818 lecture titled 'On Shakespeare and Milton', where he attempts to rehabilitate the slandered Napoleon. His method for doing so is first to relate the parallels that had been drawn between Napoleon and the Devil in hateful propaganda, after which he embarks on a panegyric over Satan's noble character, thus implicitly praising

the French emperor.[24] Hazlitt may have been innovative when he turned the tables in this manner, but he was not unique.

'PRIDE AND AUDACIOUS IMPIETY': SHELLEY'S INSURRECTIONIST CELEBRATION OF SATAN

Aside from Godwin, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), one of the (later to be) most famous Romantic poets, had employed Satan as a symbol of political goodness already six years before Hazlitt's daring polemics. Shelley, eventually Godwin's son-in-law, made Satan a positive political role model during the short-lived campaign for Irish political reform he engaged in during 1812, when he wrote a broadsheet titled 'A Declaration of Rights'. It ends with a quote from Satan's speech to the fallen angels in Book II of *Paradise Lost*: 'Awake!—arise!—or be for ever fallen'.[25] As Peter A. Schock has called attention to, the parallel becomes historically specific: in 1798 and 1803 the Irish had tried to rise up against the English, but the rebellions had been brutally quenched—just like the revolt of the rebel angels, after which Satan holds the speech Shelley quotes from.[26] While at Oxford, Shelley had published a small tract titled *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811), leading to his expulsion. In his essay 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821, published in 1840) he takes up the theme Godwin treated in 'Of Choice in Reading' and analyses Milton as a subversive poet, claiming that the depiction of a morally superior Satan in *Paradise Lost* (thus Shelley reads the figure) results in a rebuttal of Christianity as such.[27] Here Shelley reused a passage from his earlier text 'On the Devil, and Devils' (ca. 1819), which during his own lifetime remained unpublished. In it, he enthusiastically praises Milton's Satan:

> Nothing can exceed the grandeur and the energy of the character of the Devil as expressed in Paradise Lost. … Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent, in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy,—not from any mistaken notion of bringing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the open and alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments.[28]

The text utilizes abstract logical (e.g. pertaining to theodicy, one of Christianity's classic weak points) as well as scientific arguments, for instance, inspired by recent developments in astronomy, to show how absurd

the Christian myth of Satan is.[29] Shelley was wary of in any way revitalizing Christian myth, including 'that miserable tale of the Devil' as he describes it in a footnote to *Queen Mab* (1813).[30] Yet, Godwin's idealization of Satan as the embodiment of revolutionary fervour was evidently tempting to implement. He solved the dilemma by borrowing the most appealing traits from Milton's Satan and merging them with other mythological figures—in *The Assassins* (1814) as well as *Queen Mab* with the Wandering Jew, and, most famously, in *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) with the Greek title character. In these works, God is demonized as a despicable autocrat, against whom the protagonists battle.[31] Shelley's preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, however, underscores the moral difference between the Greek Titan and Milton's Satan. The latter has 'taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement', which makes him unsuitable to amalgamate with the thoroughly noble Prometheus.[32] Regardless, Shelley has done exactly this in his play. In *The Assassins*, the other stand-in for Satan, the Wandering Jew, cries out to God: 'I was thy slave. … I am thine equal, and thy foe.—Thousands tremble before thy throne who at my voice shall dare to pluck the golden crown from thine unholy head.'[33] The same aggressive self-aggrandisement in the face of God is displayed by this figure in *Queen Mab*, where he explains that even before Christ cursed him he had 'learned to prefer / Hell's freedom to the servitude of Heaven', wherefore he goes on with his 'unending pilgrimage', sworn to struggle against 'my almighty Tyrant, and to hurl / Defiance at His impotence to harm / Beyond the curse I bore'.[34] In the fragment 'Satan Broken Loose' (ca. 1817–19), Shelley fantasizes about Satan finally exacting his vengeance upon God. It ends with the eternally burning lamps in God's palace flickering out, foreboding the fall of Heaven.[35] Schock sees this as a 'striking vision, a piece of triumphant Satanism' that 'idealizes the demonic invaders'.[36] It can be read thus but could also be perceived as a Gothic reverie on the sublimity of ruination and downfall, where the aesthetic pleasure of a terrible event is the point rather than an up-valuation of the cause of terror (Satan) as 'good' in any sense—Gothic horror, rather than the triumphant Satanism (this term implying that Satan is held up as positive) Schock suggests. An idealization of the demons is difficult to find in the fragment itself, even if it could possibly be read into the lines in question on the basis of Shelley's well-known expressions of sympathy for Lucifer elsewhere.

For our present purposes, the most interesting text by Shelley is *The Revolt of Islam* (1817, also known as *Laon and Cythna*).[37] The poem is dedicated to his wife Mary Shelley, who was, of course, the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. This is quite fitting, since both her parents’ predilections are reflected in the poem: Godwin’s enthusiasm for Satan as well as Wollstonecraft’s feminist ideas. There is also a possibility that Shelley was aware of the latter’s phrasing concerning Satanic pride when turning to the subject of downtrodden women. In the long dedication to his wife, Shelley praises his deceased mother-in-law as one ‘Whose life was like a setting planet mild, / Which clothed thee [her daughter] in the radiance undefiled / Of its departing glory’.[38] None of the traditional names of Satan are used in the poem, but it is completely clear that the inverted dualist mythology sketched in canto I has Lucifer as its hero. A serpent battles with an eagle in the sky, but is defeated and falls from the heavens. These two animals are the shapes taken by the spirits of good and evil, respectively: ‘Two powers o’er mortal things dominion hold / Ruling the world with a decided lot, Immortal, all-pervading, manifold’.[39] The serpent is identified as the Morning Star, making it obvious just who this figure is. However, the wicked one, the eagle, is the one who was subsequently mistakenly perceived by humanity as the ‘good’ God:

> Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
> One Power of many shapes which none may know,
> One shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
> In victory, reigning over a world of woe,
> For the new race of man went to and fro,
> Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
> And hating good—for his immortal foe,
> He changed from a starry shape, beauteous and mild,
> To a dire snake, with man and beast unreconciled.
> . . .
> And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
> The nations of mankind, and every tongue
> Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed; for none
> Knew good from evil, though their names were hung

In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
As King and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own,—[40]

This Fiend is the creator of death, earthquake, blight, and so on. His enemy the serpent is the benefactor of mankind and the enemy of all oppressors. When he once again resumes his combat with "God", thrones will shake and 'earth's immense and trampled multitude' will begin to realize its own power.[41] This is perhaps Shelley's most straightforward idealization of Satan as an icon of righteous revolt. In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley has taken his semantic inversion all the way, and made God the author of all evil and Satan the bringer of good, whilst simultaneously removing himself to some extent from Christian mythology by not using their actual names.[42] The latter may be due to a fear of the legal dangers involved in outright Satanism, since blasphemy was punishable.[43] Still, just which powers that the serpent and eagle, respectively, were intended to symbolize would probably have been clear to most readers. The serpent may also be linked to Shelley's interest in the American Revolutionary War and the democratic model that resulted from it. In this war, the Culpeper Minutemen, who fought on the American side, famously used a coiled snake as their insignia, accompanied by the emblazoned words 'Don't tread on me'.[44]

After its fall, the serpent is taken care of by a woman, who speaks in a melodious language that is 'His native tongue and hers'.[45] The woman has a sort of amorous relationship with this spirit and has been visited at night by 'A wingèd youth', whose 'radiant brow did wear / The Morning Star'. Lucifer kissed her and declared 'A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden'.[46] This appears to be an echo of the story of the Watcher angels, which was, as mentioned in chapter 2, well-known among the Romantics (in 1821, for example, Byron would write a play about them), but also has similarities with traditions concerning an erotic relation between Eve and the serpent.[47] The fact that the good spirit has visited her in her sleep further resembles how Satan first approaches Eve in this way in *Paradise Lost*, and that the woman here is an orphan might also identify her with Eve, who, for obvious reasons, had no parents. It is quite significant, I believe, that the freedom-loving Satan's primary ally in the framing narrative is a woman. Another interesting circumstance is that Satan is subsequently identified with nature, in the woman's assertion that 'the tempest-shaken wood, / The waves, the

fountains, and the hush of night – / These were his voice'.[48] Woman and Satan are both part of nature, while God and males are connected to a hierarchical, unjust civilization. This is a motif we will encounter many times in later texts.

In the main part of the poem (cantos II–XI), the siblings Laon and Cythna struggle for liberty in a fictional state in the Levant. Supernatural agents play no part here and put in a final appearance only in the closing canto.[49] Placing the action in a Muslim country may have been a safety measure, since the analogies to the French Revolution would otherwise have been too provocative for English readers.[50] Moreover, as one scholar puts it, the Muslim world here figures 'as the type of man's brutal subjugation of woman to patriarchal values'.[51]

There are a number of parallels in the text between Cythna and the maiden who is the beloved of Satan in the first canto, and it seems probable that Shelley intended them to mirror each other.[52] In extension, then, Cythna is the earthly messenger of Satan the liberator. This messenger propagates feminist ideas and defies gender roles. Cythna leads the final insurrection against the tyrant Sultan who is the villain of the tale, which is a quite remarkable role for a woman to be allowed to play. The revolt, however, is ill-fated, and brother and sister are burned at the stake. Before this sad ending, Cythna is given the opportunity to make some startling proclamations. 'I am not weak', she tells her brother, and says she wishes to join him 'to wreak / Ruin upon the tyrants'.[53] She continues:

> Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
> Through Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
> Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
> Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells
> There with the music of thine own sweet spells
> Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
> For the despairing, from the crystal wells
> Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
> And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.[54]

This feminist revolution, it seems, is to be consistently implemented, not just among women held captive by the ruling class, but in all sections of society.

Cythna rhetorically asks: 'Can man be free if woman be a slave?'[55] Her declaration of intent, quoted above, sees Cythna promise the liberation of women by 'disenchanting' them. Without being overly anachronistic, this can be read as a shattering of their false consciousness through subversion of the myths (social and religious) that are their true fetters. Such a programme can be found in Shelley's introduction to *The Revolt of Islam* as well. He wrote it, he says, 'in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for … doctrines of liberty and justice'. Yet, he emphasizes, his poem is 'narrative, not didactic' in its attempts at 'the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they [the oppressed people] have been deluded into submission'. This quite clearly indicates that Shelley was here attempting to create a counter-myth, a narrative that uses mythological figures to demonstrate certain ideological points (including explicitly feminist ones) in opposition to those typically inferred from the presently hegemonic myths of Christianity. Shelley further explains: 'I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed.'[56] His method, in other words, is not merely a straightforward allegory inverting the ruling myths, but an appeal to the feelings. I would contend that Shelley aims to achieve this by merging poetical language with Christian motifs, thus creating a potent hybrid of literature and religious myth. As it happens, in this particular example of such hybridization, Shelley's revolutionary Satanism is combined with what can, without much hesitation, be described as a feminist ideal.

This is further reflected, for example, in how Cythna takes on a role coded as masculine, when she comes charging on a black steed, sword in hand, to rescue her brother.[57] Shelley held a utopian vision that gender differences, 'detestable distinctions', as he called them in a letter, would 'surely be abolished in a future state of being'.[58] English literature scholar Nathaniel Brown has convincingly argued that '[t]he liberation of woman occupies a central position in all three of his major verse forecasts of futurity'.[59] In *Queen Mab*, Shelley writes of 'Woman and man, in confidence and love, / Equal and free and pure', and in *Prometheus Unbound* he prophesizes about

> And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
> . . .
> From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;

Speaking the wisdom once they could not think
And changed to all which once they dared not be.[60]

Brown labels *The Revolt of Islam* 'the most powerful feminist poem in the language' and the second 'most thoroughly grounded in the realities of the woman question', being 'focused … squarely on the efforts of the subject sex to cast off the chains of male supremacy'.[61] The Victorian poet and feminist Mathilde Blind (1841–1896) agreed, excitedly describing Cythna as 'a new female type' with no previous parallels in literature. All other poets creating fictional female figures, 'however pure or lofty these might be, had depicted her invariably in her relation as either wife or mistress, mother or daughter—that is, as a supplement to man's nature' (figure 3.1). Cythna, by contrast, Blind says, sees it as 'her right and duty to take an active share in the general concerns of humanity, and to influence them, not only indirectly'.[62] Later feminists like Blind may have appreciated it, but *The Revolt of Islam* did not sell well, and was met with severely hostile reviews.[63] It was nevertheless reprinted several times during the nineteenth century as part of editions of Shelley's collected works, and eventually reached a wide audience in this manner.

FIGURE 3.1 Illustration (name of artist not given) from a 1904 edition of Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* (1817), an early example of Satanic feminism: Cythna, Satan's apostle of liberation who endeavours to

free all women from patriarchal oppression, defies gender roles by charging the enemy on her steed, wielding a sword.

'ENERGY IS ETERNAL DELIGHT': BLAKE'S ENERGIZING SATAN, AND AN ANTI-SATANIST BACKLASH

The first Romantic to turn Satan into a hero in a literary work (as opposed to essays, polemical texts, and private letters) in a comprehensive manner was not Shelley, but William Blake (1757–1827). However, he was never really famous during his lifetime, and his ideas only had a real impact on the next generation. He started to become well-known in the second half of the nineteenth century, and by the 1890s, through the efforts of poets and artists like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Butler Yeats, he was firmly established as a Romantic genius. At this time he became quite widely read, at least in avant-garde literary circles.[64] Blake was multi-talented, a poet as well as a pictorial artist, and in his visionary illustrated texts these capacities are combined to express his esoteric-mystic musings, which were initially inspired by Swedenborg.[65] His use of the figure of Satan can be divided into two phases. First, he idealized the Devil, and later he employed him in a more conventional (even if the word *conventional* is applicable only with a major caveat to anything in Blake's writings) manner as a symbol of evil. The central work of the first phase is *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (ca. 1790–93), where Satan—as demonstrated by, for example, John Howard and Peter Schock—epitomizes the revolutionary and apocalyptic ideas that were prevalent in the circles in which Blake moved at the time.[66] When he wrote it, Blake had known the publisher Joseph Johnson (1738–1809) for many years, and occasionally attended his dinner parties where William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft were also among the commonly seen faces.[67] It is therefore unsurprising that his own text bears the mark of, for instance, Godwin's view of Satan. As with the other radicals, Blake's appreciation of the Devil had Milton as its starting point, and he famously claimed about the Puritan bard that he 'wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell … because he was a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it'.[68]

In *The Marriage*, Blake identifies Satan with energy and creativity. The opening passage, 'The Argument', explains that 'Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Evil is Hell. Good is

Heaven'. Shortly afterwards, 'The Voice of the Devil' adds that 'Energy is eternal delight'.[69] Satan is held up as an expansive, generative, and chaotic force that energizes the cosmos. Hannes Vatter, in an important study of the Devil in English literature, has the following view of the ideas expressed by Blake through lines like the ones just quoted:

> Blake leaves no doubt that what he ironically calls 'Evil' is really good to him. This attitude must be borne in mind as the dominant feature in Romantic Satanism: the appreciation, often passionate, of values and ideas which are condemnable by orthodox standards, but are considered essentially good in the light of the new romantic philosophy.[70]

The Romantic Satanists, then, are clearly an example of the active production of a counter-discourse of the sort delineated in my introduction. Through a tactic of semantic inversion, for example, stating that evil is good, authors like Blake challenge mainstream value systems and subvert their signs. Shelley was more explicit in this, and his use of Satan as a positive figure must be seen as part of his broader anticlerical deconstruction of Christianity, where he used the Devil as a particularly apt example of the absurdity of religious doctrines. His attack was thus twofold: first, tearing down old dogmas through rational and analytical argumentation, and secondly creating a disruptive counter-myth. To him, institutionalized Christianity was part of a vast, oppressive structure of conservatism that needed to be done away with, and Satan came to epitomize this conviction. Like Shelley, Blake to some extent also espoused a revolutionary political agenda. This, it should be stressed, is no reason to doubt the religious-esoteric fervour permeating his works—for him, the two were intertwined.

In contrast, first-generation Romantics like William Wordsworth (1770–1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), and Robert Southey (1774–1843) had become more and more conservative over the years, bowing down to the flag, the throne, and the cross. Using a literally demonizing rhetoric, these aging poets now condemned progressive forces. For example, in his *Statesman's Manual* (1816) Coleridge explains the contemporary political unrest in Britain with a supposed diabolical French influence. The atheism and apotheosis of reason tied up with the French Revolution is, in his view, a modern expression of the serpent's words to Eve in the Garden of Eden: 'ye shall be as gods' (Gen 3:5). Napoleon, being the final product of the revolution, embodies 'satanic pride and rebellious self-idolatry'.[71] Southey contributed similar diatribes to the political debate. In an 1816–17 issue of

the conservative periodical *The Quarterly Review*, he attacks the reformists' celebration of the will of the people ('Vox Populi, Vox Dei'). It is not God's voice that is being heard, he claims, rather 'it is the Devil whose name is Legion'. He then lists a number of misdeeds that were all instigated by the will of the people: the reign of terror during the French Revolution, Socrates' death, the crucifixion of Christ.[72] A few years later, in the preface to *A Vision of Judgement* (1821), Southey extended his demonization to fellow poets and targeted Shelley and his friend Lord Byron (though their names are not mentioned he is clearly referring to them) and designated them 'the Satanic School', likening them to two of Milton's fallen angels, Belial and Moloch:

> [T]hough their productions breathe the spirit of Belial in their lascivious parts, and the spirit of Moloch in those loathsome images of atrocities and horrors which they delight to represent, they are more especially characterized by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety.[73]

'A SATANIST MANIFESTO FOR ROMANTIC READERS': THE AUTONOMOUS MIND

It seems, however, that attacks like these only strengthened the subversive resolve of those at the receiving end. In August 1821, three weeks after he had started work on his play *Cain: A Mystery*, Byron was visited by Shelley. The latter argued for a counter-attack, and this probably influenced the seditious and provocative monologues that Byron has Lucifer utter in the play. Even so, the words of Lucifer remain elusive and it is never completely clear whether they are uncomfortable truths or sinister manipulation. Shelley had suggested in 'On the Devil, and Devils' that Milton escaped negative consequences by hiding a supposedly anti-Christian polemic in fictional form, and this may be why Byron chose a play as his riposte. But he was unwilling to become an easy target for further conservative accusations of 'Satanism', a consideration that likely impacted his ironic and evasive Lucifer. Further, blasphemy was punishable. Even worse, the anti-Christian rants in *Queen Mab* had lost Shelley custody of his children, and Byron may have worried about being similarly deprived of his daughter Ada.[74]

In *Cain*, Lucifer has benevolent features, but is also a cold and aloof personage whose ultimate aim is hardly to help humankind. At the beginning of the play, Lucifer is allowed to depict God as evil without anyone being there to raise objections:

> Goodness would not make

Evil; and what else hath he made? But let him
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,
Creating worlds, to make eternity
Less burthensome to his immense existence
And unparticipated solitude[75]

As the story progresses Lucifer proves to be quite uncaring about mankind, and God is 'exonerated'—at least that is the common reading. Schock, in contrast, sees this part as depicting how 'Cain fails to achieve the intellectual liberation Lucifer sets before him', a liberation being propagated using words springing from what the Romantics perceived as a key passage in *Paradise Lost* (more of which soon). Lucifer has earlier claimed that he is not identical to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, but still highlights the motif of the forbidden fruit in his final speech:

One good gift has the fatal apple given—
Your *reason*:—let it not be over-sway'd
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:
Think and endure,—and form an inner world
In your own bosom—where the outward fails;
So shall you nearer be the spiritual
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.[76]

It is difficult to see these words as anything but an expression of the values of the young Romantic freethinkers themselves, uttered by Lucifer. With great certainty we can assume that many contemporaries, who knew full well the poet's stance, would have read it thus. Although Lucifer at times seems a mere malefactor—who tries to lure Cain's soul to his as of yet empty Hell—the figure also frequently embodies views held by the author and his circle.

The key passage that inspired Lucifer's final speech in *Cain* derives from Satan's speech in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, where he has just fallen into Hell and proclaims that he has '[a] mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time', further explicating that '[t]he mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n'.[77] Byron had referred to this passage earlier. In his play *Manfred* (1817), the title character constantly emphasizes his own self-sufficiency. He refuses to be judged by society and rejects the

overtures of, in turn, a collection of spirits led by Arimanes (the Persian name of the Zoroastrian equivalent of the Devil), an abbot (representing Christianity), 'the Witch of the Alps' and, finally, 'the evil genius', Satan. It is, however, Manfred himself who sounds like an echo of Milton's fallen angel in his speeches to the abbot and the evil genius. To Satan, Manfred lays down that

> What I have done is done: I bear within
> A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
> The mind which is immortal makes itself
> Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
> Is its own origin of ill and end—
> And its own place and time[78]

In regards to the speech in *Paradise Lost* that Manfred's words originate in, Peter L. Thorslev has contended that Milton in all probability had a psychological meaning in mind, where mental suffering is portrayed as worse than its physical counterpart, making Hell more a state of mind than a physical location.[79] Such a portrayal also has parallels elsewhere in older English literature. In Marlowe's *Faust*, Mephostophilis says 'Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed / In one self place, but where we are is hell, / And where hell is, there must we ever be'.[80]

Another dimension is the stoicism of the speech, which according to Thorslev was an attack on the late Roman stoicism that went through a revival in Milton's time. Making Satan the propagator of such ideas, which Milton at least in an exaggerated form found questionable, was a way of critiquing them (the stoic self-reliance of Satan paradoxically became one of the main reasons later interpreters would view him as the hero of the epic). A third possible reading is that the speech deals with epistemology and the ability of the mind to create worlds in fantasy or art but also pertains to the creation of reality in a metaphysical sense. Such an interpretation is not likely to have been very prominent, if it even existed, in Milton's day and age. Finally, an 'existentialist' ethos can also be perceived, which could be taken as a logical development of the third dimension just mentioned. Here, Satan's words would be an affirmation of complete ethical relativism, which would hardly have appealed to very many Romantics (Thorslev claims Byron would have been one of them, something I find unconvincing). In this

context, the Miltonic Satan's famous exclamation 'Evil, be thou my good' would be a declaration of purpose where he aims to create a set of values completely his own, even though it merely inverts its heavenly counterpart. This, according to Thorslev, points forward to Nietzsche's 'Umwertung aller Werte' and its final consequence of rejecting all gods and trumpeting the *Übermensch*. All these four potential implications of Satan's speech share an emphasis on the autonomous mind, and each is more than the preceding directed towards subjectivity, self-sufficiency, creativity, and radical freedom. Thorslev sees these as the central traits of Romantic Satanism, as well as a basic feature of Romanticism in general, even with less rebellious poets.[81] Other scholars have agreed on the centrality of this speech for Romantic Satanism, and Peter A. Schock calls it 'a Satanist manifesto for Romantic Readers'.[82]

In *Cain*, it is this manifesto that forms the basis of Lucifer's eulogizing of the human mind as the 'centre of surrounding things', as well as his doubts that he is God's creation and his claims to have been equally responsible for the creation of the universe. Milton's Satan thus becomes, in Peter Schock's words, 'an image of apotheosis, an emblem of an aspiring, rebelling, rising human god who insists that he is self-created'. This can be seen as part of a broader tendency, the Romantics' transference of the divine from God in Heaven to man himself.[83] For example, in his 1816 poem 'Prometheus', Byron writes about how 'Man is in part divine'.[84] This sacralization of the self is a leitmotif in much writing with Satanic tendencies both in the Romantic period and later, as is the notion, with its attendant implications, of the mind being its own place. Hence, we will encounter variations on both numerous times throughout this study.

A question that has been left unattended is how to define Romanticism. The term has been debated for several generations.[85] The common view is that Romanticism was a very loosely structured current of a mostly artistic nature, which arose in Europe around the middle of the eighteenth century, with Germany and England as its early primary centres. In literature it blossoms most fiercely during the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first three of the nineteenth century, but many later authors also wrote in somewhat the same mould. Some consider it a reaction to rationalism and Enlightenment thought, a repudiation of cold intellectual reflection that led to an elevation of emotions and imagination.[86] The radical subjectivity of

Byron's Lucifer fits well with such a view. However, Romanticism could also be seen as closely related to the Enlightenment in some respects, including the negative attitude towards submission to established authorities, among them orthodox forms of Christianity, and the support that, for instance, Shelley gave to republicanism (Byron was more ambivalent in the matter). The convergence of revolutionary sympathies and Satanism among Romantics has led scholars to conclusions like that reached by Maximilian Rudwin: 'Romanticism was the logical reflex of the political revolution which preceded it.'[87] This statement may be slightly simplistic, as there were plenty of non-revolutionary and fairly conservative Romantics, but undoubtedly it contains a kernel of truth on one level. With writers like Shelley, the French Revolution and its egalitarian values almost constantly hover somewhere in the background. Aside from receiving some impetus from the violent events on the other side of the channel, the counter-readings of biblical tradition and Milton performed by the Romantics were, naturally, made possible by the gradual breaking down of Christianity's hegemony. This slow collapse gained increased momentum from the 1750s onwards, precisely the period when Romanticism began to bud as a movement. The disrespectful handling of Christian mythology on the part of many Romantics helped further hasten this process of dethroning Christianity as ultimate truth. Authors like Shelley and, especially, Byron were, after all, among the most widely read of their day. Hence, literature, and literary Satanism, helped change the European religious landscape.[88]

It is worth stressing a final time that none of the English Romantics who are well-known for celebrating Lucifer—Blake, Byron, Shelley—unequivocally praised the fallen angel throughout their careers. They all continued writing about him, occasionally idealizing him but later on more often using him as a stereotypical symbol of evil. As we have seen, many of the texts that have been considered examples of Romantic Satanism also display a great deal of ambiguity in their portraits of Satan. Frequently, even the idealizations of Satan contain minor caveats, as evidenced, for example, by Godwin's objections to Satan's selfishness, Shelley's reservations in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound* or Byron's embedding of his Lucifer in *Cain* in thick layers of authorial irony (and partial conservation of some of the Devil's evil traits). Such dulling of the Satanic edge was probably partly due to fear of the harsh blasphemy laws of the time. Cautionary measures of

this type would, however, be discarded by some of those who followed in the footsteps of the Romantics later in the nineteenth century.

'THE ARCHANGEL OF LEGITIMATE REBELLION': THE SATAN OF ROMANTICS AND ANARCHISTS IN FRANCE

In France, Romantic poets—starting with Alfred de Vigny's *Eloa* (1823)—developed a tradition of sentimental sympathy for Satan, which was expressed in poems about how this outcast is finally reconciled with God.[89] Victor Hugo's unfinished epic *La Fin de Satan* (which he worked on between 1854 and 1862) is perhaps the most ambitious example of this motif. In these texts, the notion of the Devil as virtuous or as a freedom fighter was not brought to the fore as much as in English Romanticism, although Hugo has a feather from Satan's wing engender the allegorical figure of the angel Liberty.[90] Most French Romantics thus differ markedly from their English counterparts in this respect. George Sand, in her novel *Consuelo* (first published as a serial in a journal in 1842–43), takes a slightly more 'English' approach. The eponymous protagonist of the tale has a vision of Satan where he tells her: 'I am not the demon, I am the archangel of legitimate rebellion and the patron of the grand struggles. Like Christ, I am the god of the poor, of the weak, and of the oppressed.'[91] The vision (or hallucination) ends with her falling to her knees in front of Lucifer. Sand was a socialist sympathizer, but she does not explicitly connect the Devil with this ideology, although this connection is implied by the idea of him as an 'archangel of legitimate rebellion' and the patron of the poor and oppressed. Sand's Satan has been pardoned by God and promises to bring freedom side by side with Christ, and hence does not break completely with the approach that was typical of the French Romantics. We can note here that Sand, an extremely prolific and successful female author as well as an exceedingly public figure, led a highly unconventional life. She used a male pseudonym, wore trousers, smoked, and took numerous lovers. In spite of an extensive disregard for gendered conventions, however, she declared her hostility towards feminism.[92] The combination of a measure of Satanism and a woman with a transgressive lifestyle is nonetheless potentially important in the context of the present study. Sand may have functioned as a role model for others who later amalgamated ideas about free love, freedom for women, and Satanism.

Sand's self-reliant and enterprising heroine Consuelo, though almost parodically idealized in her virtuousness, also shares some of the author's nonconformist urges, as she has trouble choosing between love and living for art (she has a fantastic singing voice). Interestingly, this independent and artistic young woman with warm feelings for Satan is herself repeatedly likened to the Devil in the novel. When she has performed an aria from Galuppi's 1755 opera *La Diavolessa*, her teacher is so impressed that he exclaims 'It is you who are Satan himself!'.[93] When she has later helped him with a musical composition he is working on, he says 'You are the Devil! I always thought you were the Devil!' She answers: 'A kindly Devil, believe me, master.'[94] When she spurns the advances of a wicked baron, he asks himself 'what manner of she-devil is this?'[95] A self-assertive woman turning a man down hence becomes a 'diablesse', and a woman with sufficient musical talent to assist her teacher in composing music is also diabolical.

Celebrations of Satan in the role of God's adversary did not really reach prominence in France until Charles Baudelaire wrote his *Les Fleurs du mal* ('The Flowers of Evil', 1857). Satan haunts several of the poems in this book, but the most explicitly Satanic is 'Les Litanies de Satan' ('Litany to Satan'), where the Devil is portrayed—in a partly ironic manner—as a saviour, especially for the downtrodden and despised. However, the poet's own commitment to social justice was fleeting and fickle at best. During the 1848 revolution, he was swept along and even briefly mounted the barricades brandishing a revolver, but he was not politically active in any lasting way.[96] Where English Romantics occasionally whitewashed Lucifer and made him entirely a righteous rebel, Baudelaire's portrayal is at all times more complex, representing a transitional stage between politicized Romantic Satanism and a later Decadent variety. The Decadents could (often half-jokingly) revere Satan as evil, the patron of cruelty and unspeakable carnal sins (a tendency we will consider more closely in chapter 7), instead of elevating him to the lofty heights of a noble cosmic and political liberator.[97] In Baudelaire's poems he is, in a sense, both. I shall shortly return to the question of possible political authorial intent with *Les Fleurs du mal*.

The renowned French historian, republican, and social agitator Jules Michelet (1798–1874) can be placed in the same tradition as George Sand, where Satanism is a symbol of revolt against oppression. His book *La*

Sorcière ('The Witch', 1862) presents the theory that those who were accused of witchcraft in medieval times truly did practice Satanism, and that it was an expression of righteous class hatred on the part of feudal society's underprivileged. Since the nobility had God and the Church on their side, the desperate medieval peasantry had to turn to God's great adversary, Satan. This Satan is no evil figure to Michelet, but rather an embodiment of science, reason, and all that is natural. In this work especially, Michelet was more of a Romantic than a scholar. Hence, *La Sorcière* contains a greater amount of colourful Gothic vignettes and passages approximating prose poems, than historical research grounded in archival sources (this influential text will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6).

La Sorcière was based on academic lectures held by the author. One of the young students attending Michelet's classes in the late 1830s and early 1840s was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), who would become one of anarchism's most important thinkers.[98] Since Michelet was a teacher who expressly sought to imprint his own ideas on the minds of his students, it is possible that this charismatic lecturer made Proudhon incorporate a sprinkling of Satanism when he started to write his anarchist works. The two also associated privately later, although the teacher was sceptical of some of his former student's ideas, like the famous (and often misunderstood) maxim 'property is theft'.[99] He was perhaps less hesitant towards exclamations in the book *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'église* ('Concerning Justice in the Revolution and in the Church', 1858) like the following, where Proudhon addresses a hater of freedom:

> Liberty, symbolized by the story of the temptation, is your Antichrist; liberty, for you, is the Devil. Come, Satan, come, the one slandered by priests and kings, so that I may embrace you, so that I may hold you to my chest! Long have I known you, and you know me too. Your works, oh beloved of my heart, are not always beautiful nor good; but only they bestow meaning upon the universe and prevent it from being absurd. … Hope yet, outcast! I have at your service but a pen: but it equals millions of ballots.[100]

Other things Proudhon writes in this chapter make it clear that he is first and foremost praising Satan in order to attack the conservative forces that regard freedom as Satanic. This, however, was not the first time Proudhon had sung Satan's praise. In the first volume of *Système des contradictions économiques* ('The System of Economic Contradictions', 1846) he wrote of '[t]he spirit of analysis, the indefatigable Satan who questions and

contradicts without cease'.[101] In *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle* ('The General Idea of Revolution during the Nineteenth Century', 1851) he exclaims: 'Stand by me, Lucifer, Satan, whoever you are, demon who in the faith of my fathers opposed God and the Church! I will carry your word, and I ask for nothing.'[102] All the same, we must not misconstrue Proudhon's occasional outbursts of sympathy for the Devil. As a whole, his writings are more anticlerical than anti-Christian, and he never ceased to praise the virtues of early Christianity.[103] In fact, the idea of property being theft arose from his attempts to correct existing translations of the Bible. Even if he was always critical towards the church, he was during periods of his life a practising Catholic and an avid reader of the Bible, who even studied Hebrew in order to better understand the Holy Writ. According to him, the gospels proscribed inequality, but the church had strayed from this original position.[104]

It is possible that Proudhon may have influenced Baudelaire's Satanism, as the poet was enthusiastic about the anarchist's works and also met with him several times from 1848 onwards. A political subtext to poems like 'Les Litanies de Satan' is therefore conceivable.[105] Proudhon met not only with struggling poets but also with several important socialists. Among them was the Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), who to some extent let himself be inspired by the French anarchist. Ultimately, however, he rejected Proudhon's peaceful and theoretical teaching in favour of a more violent anarchism of his own devising. For a while, Bakunin was a leading name in international revolutionary socialism, but unlike his main competitor Marx he was never a great system builder. Instead, his fame rested primarily on his celebrated deeds as a practical revolutionary. According to Bakunin, revolt is an inherited instinct in all men rather than something that needs to be arrived at through complicated reasoning. This view of rebellion as a basic human urge was presented in a Satanist framework in his most famous text, *Dieu et l'état* ('God and State'), which was written in 1871 as part of a planned larger work and published in 1882, six years after the author's death. Since the book was composed in French, I here discuss it in the section on French literary and socialist Satanism, even if Bakunin was Russian by birth and a cosmopolitan figure throughout most of his life.

Dieu et l'état is a frontal assault on Christianity. Bakunin describes the Bible as 'a very interesting and here and there very profound book', but

holds God up as 'the most jealous, the most vain, the most ferocious, the most unjust, the most bloodthirsty, the most despotic, and the most hostile to human dignity and liberty'.[106] According to Bakunin, God forbade Adam and Eve from eating from the fruit on the tree of knowledge because he sought to ensure that 'man, destitute of all understanding of himself, should remain an eternal beast, ever on all-fours before the eternal God'.[107] In the anarchist's Satanist counter-reading, Lucifer now hurries to our rescue:

> But here steps in Satan, the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge.[108]

Bakunin asserts that 'God admitted that Satan was right; he recognized that the devil did not deceive Adam and Eve in promising them knowledge and liberty as a reward for the act of disobedience which he had induced them to commit'.[109] Hence, mankind's development starts with rebellion, which leads to freedom of thought. The inspirer of this is Satan, who to Bakunin symbolizes revolt and reason. That Bakunin chooses to utilize a mythological figure in such a manner is slightly strange, considering his uncompromising atheism. In the same text, he himself later warns the reader that we are always at risk of 'sooner or later' relapsing back 'into the abyss of religious absurdity'.[110] In Bakunin's view, belief in God is one of the most threatening obstacles that stand in the way of humanity's liberation, for the simple reason that when we are '[s]laves of God, men must also be slaves of Church and State, in so far as the State is consecrated by the Church'.[111] Hereby Bakunin even claims he can disprove the existence of God: 'If God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free; then, God does not exist.'[112]

Even so, the figure of Satan is apparently irresistible to use. The reasons for this are difficult to be sure of. Bakunin may have been so deeply rooted in a Christian cultural tradition that (a purely symbolical) Satan simply seemed the logical antipole of God and the Church. Perhaps he wanted to provoke his readers, or he may have considered a Satanist counter-reading of the Bible to be an effective means to destabilize the truth claims and status of the Holy Writ. Satan could also function as a rhetorically effective tool that gives some colour to the exposition of abstract political ideas.

Slightly later, the red Devil reared his head in the periphery of Europe as well. In late nineteenth-century Sweden, use of Satan as a heroic political figure became remarkably widespread among Social Democrats. This may serve as a minor case study of how prominent Satan the liberator could be in some types of subversive discourse, and I believe it likely that something similar could be found in other national contexts if one were to examine the archives of their local worker’s movements (as the two American examples at the end of the chapter hints).[113] The prevalence of this type of Lucifer in Sweden was probably due to the popularity of English Romanticism with some of the country’s more intellectually inclined socialists. I have found no direct references to Proudhon or Bakunin in the Swedish political celebrations of Satan, but that does, of course, not rule out that such an influence could also have been at work in some instances. As for locally produced esoteric or literary Satanism, there was very little of either in Sweden or Scandinavia at the time, so the motif did not have an indigenous background of that type.[114]

Lucifer as a specific aspect of Satan that is primarily a symbol of liberation seems to have been a well-established idea in Sweden around the turn of the century. It was not, however, Lucifer as a figure completely separated from the Devil that gained this signification.[115] Both remain aspects of one and the same figure. An example of this view is when the influential social reformer and feminist Ellen Key (1849–1926) writes in 1905 about superficial love in persons, something that according to her entails that ‘it is only the Devil, the world and their own flesh they love, a Devil that *does not have the features of Lucifer*, not even of Mephisto, but only of Beelzebub, the buzzing lord of nothingness’.[116] As can be seen, the atheist Key talks about Lucifer as a positive symbol in a manner implying that this is a commonly held view of him, yet still considers him an aspect of Satan. In accordance with traditional Christian usage, socialists occasionally employ the names Lucifer and Satan interchangeably, as will be shown.

In order to understand the use of Satan by Swedish Social Democrats, we must keep in mind that during the nineteenth century this was a threatening and radical movement—still far from the complacent hegemonic position it enjoyed during the post–World War II period. It appears highly unlikely that

any of today's Social Democrats would use the Devil as a symbol of their own ideals, but this was precisely what their more militant predecessors did. The choice of name for their magazine *Lucifer*, that started publication in 1891, signals this. Even if it is claimed in the first issue's editorial that the word Lucifer is here simply used in its purely etymological meaning ('light bringer'), there is no reason to doubt that the name was chosen in full awareness of its sinister connotations in the Christian tradition and was intended as a provocation against the Church and the conservative bourgeoisie (figure 3.2). The magazine had also been preceded by two more amateurish Social Democratic publications with the same name, that were both only published in one issue—Christmas 1893 and April 1887 respectively—and which featured very explicit Satanism.

FIGURE 3.2 Cover of *Lucifer*, a "worker's calendar" for 1894, published Christmas 1893.

The history of the Social Democratic movement in Sweden begins around 1881, when August Palm (1849–1922) published his pamphlet *Hvad hvilja socialdemokraterna* ('What Do the Social Democrats Want?'), but it was not constituted as a proper political party until 1889. During the loosely organized 1880s, the movement was home to socialists of many types. Before the end of the decade, however, the minority of revolutionary socialists, often labelled (more or less correctly) anarchists, had become so vocal and difficult to handle for the moderate reformists that they had to clearly separate themselves from such extremists. This was done at the party's constituting congress in Norrköping in 1889, although the party programme still left the door open for violent methods in the class struggle under extreme circumstances.[117] Hinke Bergegren (1861–1936), a top representative of the radical wing at the congress, is supposed to have advocated political assassinations to scare the ruling classes, suggesting the usefulness of 'dynamite and dagger and reign of terror' according to one newspaper report.[118] It was mainly the adherents of measures of this type that were drawn to the Lucifer figure.

During the 1890s, this phalanx formed numerous youth clubs and other small political organizations, still using the name Social Democrats. The programme of the Social Democratic party had declared religion to be a private matter, but the radicals were determined to stamp out Christianity, or, at the very least, to completely break the influence of the conservative priesthood.[119] After the 1889 purge, mainstream Social Democrat political writing tended to become more and more focused on naturalistic depictions of the difficult everyday circumstances for workers and less interested in bloody imagery of impending revolution or mythical allegories. There are, however, many exceptions to this tendency, and we encounter Satan as the scourge of capitalism even in the mainstream material at fairly late dates. Anticlerical or anti-Christian sentiments are also easy to find throughout, and in the complete 1902 version of the Swedish translation of Eugène Pottier's song 'L'Internationale', which was very popular with all types of Swedish socialists, the third verse proclaims: 'We do not greet the saviour up high, / Not gods, [nor] princes stand us by'.[120] There is admittedly quite a distance between professing atheism and (symbolically) celebrating Satan, but the latter can simply be seen as a particularly radical strategy for attacking Christianity. In the next chapter, we will look at the Theosophical journal named *Lucifer* (published between 1887 and 1897), and the use of this figure

in general by Blavatsky and other Theosophists. This is an unlikely influence on Swedish socialists, however, since they had issued their first publication under this title already in 1886. A more plausible source of inspiration could have been *Lucifer the Light-bearer*, an individualist-anarchist weekly newspaper based in Kansas (later in Chicago), starting in 1883 (more on this periodical at the end of this chapter). Swedish socialists had connections to their counterparts in the United States and could very well have been aware of it.

Let us now consider some explicit examples of Swedish socialist Satanism. In the two early *Lucifer* issues published in Sweden, the theme of Satan as a liberator is expressed in a series of poems and polemical texts by Atterdag Wermelin (1861–1904), the Lord Byron-worshipping son of a priest in the Church of Sweden. Unlike most poets of the worker's movement, Wermelin was well-educated and had studied at Uppsala University. He played something of a key part in early Swedish socialism and was the one who introduced the economic theories of Marxism in Sweden. Eventually he became marginalized, and from time to time he was even homeless. After immigrating to the United States in 1887, and finding life there just as difficult as back home, Wermelin took his own life.[121]

In the premier issue of *Lucifer* (1886), Wermelin proclaimed the 'Ten Commandments of Lucifer'. The tenth commandment lays down that 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, unless she covets only you, but his ox and ass and all the capital that belongs to him thou shalt take from him and make the property of thine brothers'.[122] As can be seen, Wermelin's socialist Satanist commandments largely invert the Christian ones, and the first of them in his version states: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me, the Lightbringer.'[123] This type of parody or inversion of passages from the Bible was a common feature in anticlerical or atheist writings during this period. A typical non-Satanic Swedish example can be found in Ellen Key's *Lifslinjer II* ('Lifelines II', 1905), where she provocatively treats the reader to a topsy-turvy version of the Beatitudes, for instance, stating, 'Blessed are the battling, for through them shall the meek finally be able to live on earth.'[124]

In the second *Lucifer* issue, Wermelin published a distinctly Byronic poem describing how the light bringer lies bound to a rock and is being pecked by a vulture, but yet cries out 'In Satan's guise, in Prometheus' guise / I remained the same—indomitable'.[125] Such Satanism appears in the more

elaborate later *Lucifer* publications as well. The 1891 issue opens with the poem 'Lucifer' by the signature 'Spartacus' (Carl Natanael Carleson, 1865–1929), where it is very clear the entity being hailed is no mere 'light bringer' in a general sense, but indeed Satan himself:

> There is a creature, who goes around
> And causes only uproar and unpleasantness.
> Formerly he is supposed to have floated freely in heavenly ether
> And been on equal terms with divine beings.[126]

This troublemaker is a hero for socialists, 'Spartacus' proclaims, and 'bring[s] light to thralls and ruin to tormentors'.[127] When Axel Uhlén, in his extensive study of Swedish socialist poetry, writes of 'revolutionsromantik' he is referring specifically to a rosy view of primarily the French Revolution of 1789 (from whence many Swedish socialists borrowed their *noms de plume*).[128] This term would also be an appropriate label for the special brand of revolutionary socialism propounded by those with sympathies for the Devil: a strain of political poetics strongly coloured by Romanticism, especially its English branch, but in some cases probably also by German texts like the previously mentioned 'Prometheus' by Goethe, and Schiller's *Die Räuber*.

A multitude of examples of socialist Satanism of this sort, which I have treated in more detail elsewhere, can be found in various Swedish socialist publications, all the way up until at least 1907.[129] When the Social Democrats started to seriously aim for a place in parliament, and for this reason expurgated the more extreme tendencies within their ranks, Satan was soon bundled off to the rubbish heap of unsuitable rhetoric. In fact, for the most part the figure met the same fate in other phalanxes of Swedish socialism as well. Early Swedish socialists were fond of using allegory and evoking a mysterious, visionary atmosphere, and gave centre stage to mythology, gods, and abstract symbols. As already discussed, a more naturalist and social realist approach instead gained ground over time, albeit still with numerous exceptions challenging its hegemony.

Ardent celebrations of Satan as the spirit of progress are frequent especially in several issues of the socialist youth association's magazine *Brand* ('Fire'). In the seventh issue of 1907, the signature 'n' contributed 'Hymn to Satan', a composition showing obvious similarities to the poem of

the same title (‘Inno a Satana’, written in 1863, published 1865) by Nobel Laureate Giosuè Carducci—in fact, so overt that it is perhaps more of a free interpretation (or, less generously put, pure plagiarism) of Carducci’s work, which was translated into Swedish by Aline Pipping in 1894.[130] Focusing on Genesis 3 once more, like, for example, Bakunin, ‘n’ blasphemously exclaims:

> Hail thee, Satan,
> who could entice
> first woman
> to pluck
> the fruit of knowledge!
> What was there before
> the light of knowledge entered the world?[131]

The writer ‘n’ goes on:

> But You Great
> Holy Satan
> Lover of man
> Hater of God
> more clever was than
> old God
> who posited
> the commandments filled with thanks.[132]

This theme of Satan as a god of reason and intellectual enlightenment, standing in opposition to God the enslaver, is also implicitly present in Erik Lindorm’s sarcastic poem ‘Paradiset’ (‘Paradise’), in his collection of socialist verse *Bubblor från botten* (‘Bubbles from the Bottom’, 1908), whose ending words are: ‘We should have been obedient, my missus / Thus yet in Paradise / Like before we would wander, blissful and stupid’.[133] Another pro-Satanic counter-reading of Genesis 3 is on display in *Brand* issue nine (1905), where an excerpt from a longer text by Uppsala University literature professor Henrik Schück demonstrates that the serpent spoke the truth when he told Eve that, contrary to God’s threats, she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. God is thus a liar and the serpent a truthful helper.

According to Schück, God feared that humans would become his equals, and this was the real reason for his admonitions concerning the fruit.[134]

To contemporaries, verses like the ones quoted here, which represent only a sampling of a larger Swedish material, would not have had the quaint and amusing qualities we may perceive in them today. Anarchists were genuinely dreaded in Sweden at the time of their publication, as several bloody terrorist deeds were perpetuated during these years. In July 1908, for example, a bomb attached to the hull of a ship in Malmö harbour housing English strike breakers was detonated, killing one person and injuring many. In 1909, the commander of the Swedish coastal artillery was shot dead by an anarchist (carrying an issue of *Brand* in his pocket!) in a Stockholm park, the intended target actually being Tsar Nicholas II who was visiting Sweden.[135] The anarchists wanted people to fear them, and Satanism would naturally have seemed a useful additional tool to accomplish this.

'SATAN ON THE SIDE OF FREEDOM': REBEL ANGELS, ANARCHO-FEMINISM, AND HENRY M. TICHENOR

A sort of final word on European Satanic socialism was said in March 1914, a few months before World War I, when Anatole France published his satirical novel *La Révolte des anges* ('The Revolt of the Angels'). Selling 60,000 copies in only six weeks, it was a huge success and would also be the author's last major work.[136] The action takes place in *belle époque* France, where an angel named Arcade starts to organize a new rebellion against God, and recruits other disgruntled angels that have adopted ideas from human anarchists and radicals. The author himself, we can note, was a self-professed socialist, but of a somewhat unconventional variety that never gained him much appreciation from left-wing parties and organizations in his country. His reputation in literary circles was, however, excellent. He had been a member of the French Academy since 1896 and received the Nobel Prize in 1921.[137]

Overall, France's final novel is a rollicking comedy with Gnostic overtones (God is even referred to as Ialdabaoth, a Gnostic name for the demiurge), but chapters 18 to 21 are slightly different and represent a more serious, grand and poetic literary Satanism, where the whole history of humanity is incorporated in a Satanic metaplot explaining that most of our greatest accomplishments—science, art, and even the Enlightenment—have

been achieved with the help of kindly devils, who have acted as cultural heroes. These entities have also consistently struggled against all types of oppression of the human spirit. In stark contrast to the compassionate fallen angels, Heaven is painted as a sort of military dictatorship, where everything circles around army hierarchy and martial exercises.[138] France here obviously critiques the militarization of his country that was taking place when he wrote and juxtaposes this to a utopian vision of a non-hierarchical ancient Greece where the fallen angels interacted with mankind under the guise of the Greek gods.

Thus far, the novel encapsulates many of the ideas typical of nineteenth-century literary and political Satanism, but then France adds a twist distinctly his own. At the end of the tale, the would-be rebel angels seek out Satan—who spends his days in a beautiful garden by the river Ganges, sprawled on comfortable black cushions embroidered with golden flames—to persuade him to once more lead a mutiny. After some deliberation, Satan however advises against physical revolution, explaining that it is 'within us and only within us that we must attack and destroy Ialdabaoth'.[139] France, through his Satan, suggests a gentle epicureanism and cultivation of the valuable things in life as a better option than war, collectivist struggle, and attempts to dominate others. A triumphant Lucifer who took over Heaven would only become a new tyrant. The Gnostic and revolutionary tendencies in the novel are thus mitigated by the fact that the alternative to God the demiurge is not an otherworldly spiritual saviour, or a leader of bloody revolts, but a sensual this-worldly Satan who advises introspection and non-action along with gratification and enjoyment here and now. Of course, Anatole France's idealistic vision of refraining from battle turned out to be far from prophetical, and four months after *La Révolte des anges* appeared Europe was drawn into a massive and brutal conflict. Very few authors would praise the Devil after World War I, and Lucifer-friendly artistic movements like Symbolism and Decadence disappeared, their fanciful reveries largely extirpated by the war's harsh realities of nerve gas, machine guns, and corpse-filled trenches. Socialist Satanism more or less vanished after the war as well, at least in Western Europe.[140]

But what of the country that would later appoint itself the worldwide scourge of socialism, the United States? First, there was the individualist anarchist and sex radical newspaper *Lucifer the Light-bearer* mentioned earlier.[141] It first appeared in August 1883, when *The Kansas Liberal*

adopted this name in order to make clear that it was a national rather than a local periodical (in 1896, it moved to Chicago). As in the case of the Swedish socialists, a desire to provoke was assuredly a factor in the choice of name and a certain connection to the biblical figure, rather than just the etymological significance of the word *Lucifer*, was fully acknowledged. The editor, agnostic schoolteacher Moses Harman (1830–1910), explained that

> [W]e do not adopt the reputed character of any man, god, demigod or demon, as our model, yet there is one phase of the character of their Lucifer that is also appropriate to our paper, viz: that of an Educator. The god of the Bible had doomed mankind to perpetual ignorance—they would never have known Good from Evil if Lucifer had not told them how to become wise as the gods themselves. Hence, according to theology, Lucifer was the first teacher of science.[142]

It is telling that Benjamin Tucker's English translation of Bakunin's *Dieu et l'état* was advertised in *Lucifer*, and it does not seem far-fetched to imagine that the Russian Apostle of Anarchy's (as the advert calls him) protest exegesis of Genesis 3 played a part when the choice of a new name was made.[143] From being a liberal periodical of more general dissident, reformist, and alternative orientation, *Lucifer* now increasingly started to propagate individualist anarchist and feminist ideas. 'We would have every man and every woman to be the proprietor of himself or herself!', Harman proclaimed.[144] When it came to the subjugation of woman, Christianity was singled out along with the state as a key institution supporting it. In Harman's view, the Christian ideal of wifely obedience, and marriage as such, was incompatible with woman's right to govern herself.[145] These thoughts were also reflected in the treatment of less abstract matters, and *Lucifer* became infamous—but also highly appreciated by some—for its frank discussions of topics like marital rape. Since Harman refused to censor the debates he published, he ended up being sentenced to prison several times for spreading obscene material.[146] During one of his prison terms, in 1891–92, *Lucifer* was edited by Lois Nichols Waisbrooker (1826–1909), who was retrospectively characterized in the 1920s as 'the strongest personality among American feminists'.[147] Another interim editor, for six months in 1893, was Lillie D. White, who pushed the women's rights questions even more fervently. For example, in her controversial (even among the radical readership of *Lucifer*) article 'Housekeeping', she laid down that 'woman's work, her place, and sphere so entirely separated from man's special fields of action is a mumbo jumbo that has been revered too long and must be dethroned'.[148] Even during

the periods when Harman acted as editor, women's rights were always high on the agenda. An editorial piece on the final page of the July 2, 1898, issue states that 'Lucifer's specialty [*sic*] is freedom of women from sex slavery', which meant the sexual oppression and exploitation of women within the bounds of marriage.[149] In the April 7, 1897, issue an article titled 'The Gospel of Discontent' proclaims:

> [T]here is one field of agitation, one department of reformatory endeavor in which Lucifer stands and works almost alone, and that is the reform that demands the Freedom of Woman from SEX SLAVERY. … there is a reform more important than all other reforms, viz: the reform that would strike the shackles from the bodies and minds of the *mothers of men*. Lucifer recognizes that while men are enslaved governmentally, economically and financially, women are enslaved not only in all these regards but also in their sex-natures, in their reproductive powers and functions; that while man is a slave woman is the slave of a slave … . Lucifer recognizes that until woman's freedom on these lines is achieved all other freedoms will avail but little, or rather that all other human freedoms will fail of accomplishment. … Lucifer's work is mainly to preach the gospel of discontent to women, to the mothers and prospective mothers of the human race. As yet the great masses of women are not awake to the fact that they are slaves—not conscious of their own degradation as individual human beings.[150]

Numerous conservative newspapers fulminated against this 'Satan paper', and its staff was, for instance, described as the 'disciples of Beelzebub' by the *Chicago Daily Times*.[151] Many feminists appreciated Harman for his contributions to their cause. *The Woman's Tribune* wrote: 'He has devoted himself to securing personal freedom for woman, and is striking many hard blows to accomplish this end.'[152] A letter to the *Lucifer* staff from a female reader, published on August 28, 1891, praised the periodical as 'the mouthpiece, almost the only mouthpiece in the world, of every poor, suffering, defrauded, subjugated woman'.[153] It should be noted, however, that the no-government ideals of the anarchists behind *Lucifer* made their stance on the question of woman suffrage somewhat ambiguous. While fully supportive of women's rights, they argued that voting in itself meant affirming state control of the individual.[154] Many of the women contributing to the debates in *Lucifer* agreed that suffrage was not really the central issue, and that other aspects of the feminist struggle should be given precedence. As Joanne E. Passet describes, they felt that suffrage would 'address only symptoms and never would truly alleviate the injustices so prevalent in their daily lives'.[155]

In 1907 it was decided to change the name of *Lucifer* to *The American Journal of Eugenics*, and to make eugenic issues (which had been part of the sex radical discourse for a long time) more or less its sole concern.[156] Thus ended this particular entwining of the figure of Lucifer and feminist causes. The fact that a periodical named *Lucifer* was a prominent organ of feminism for twenty-five years undoubtedly spread the notion of a connection between use of pro-Satan symbolism and the struggle for women's rights across the country and even abroad. In 1887, *Lucifer* distributed two thousand copies of each issue. By 1897 it reached readers in at least thirty-seven American states and at a minimum eight other countries.[157]

More overtly Satanic, and more strongly linked to European currents of pro-Satanic political discourse, was the 1917 book *The Sorceries and Scandals of Satan*, by the socialist writer and magazine publisher Henry M. Tichenor (1858–1924). Chapter 1 ends with Tichenor ascertaining that 'it seems unfair to judge the conquered by the testimony of his victorious foe', speculating that 'perhaps a candid investigation by a neutral will place Satan in different light'.[158] The rest of the book consists of precisely such an investigation. It soon becomes clear where Tichenor's sympathies lie, as he writes only a few pages later: '[T]he divinely ordained war-lords and landlords and joblords, the exploiters and extortioners, might be in Hell, if Satan had won the war he fought with Jehovah'.[159] Like many other socialists, he holds Satan up as a patron of liberty and science, claiming 'it is Satan that inspired the world's scholars and thinkers, and its rebels against oppression'. His adversary God 'does not believe in science, nor in human liberty'.[160] Similarly to Michelet and Swedish socialists, Tichenor states outright that 'Jehovah is the god of the master class' and hence Satan is logically the god of the oppressed.[161] This, he insists, is not an unorthodox view: 'That Jehovah is on the side of tyranny, and Satan on the side of freedom, has never been disputed by the Church.'[162] Jehovah not only embodies economic tyranny, he is also an enemy of all the worldly pleasures personified by Satan: 'All the joys and love and laughter of life we owe to Satan's sinners.'[163] Rounding off the book, Tichenor underscores that when 'plutocracy and priestcraft' are gone, Satan and Jehovah will both be redundant. Then '[t]he soul of Humanity shall ride victorious above the raging storm of the ages, over all the thrones and altars, over all gods and devils of earth.'[164] This is, of course, the same atheistic anthropocentric

view held by practically all of the socialist Satanists discussed thus far, but also illustrates Tichenor's conviction that until this utopia has been accomplished, Satan remains a very useful symbol to socialists. *The Sorceries and Scandals of Satan*, and all the other examples, shows that a certain distinct set of ideas about a positive Satan figure was prevalent in several Western nations. In fact, reading socialist texts of this kind from different countries often causes a feeling of being in a chamber of echoes.

Concluding words

As we have seen, literary Satanism and revolutionary or left-wing politics have been interwoven from the first appearance of the theme of Satan as a benevolent figure. The Romantic poets who praised Satan tended to be of a strongly progressive and anti-conservative bent, and the fully fledged socialists who later used the theme were often influenced by Romanticism. To some extent there is also a certain connection between feminism—or at least strong and unconventional women—and Satanism already in some Romantic texts. In George Sand's *Consuelo*, for example, a self-assertive young woman with a great need for independence (in this respect not completely unlike the author's own highly unconventional persona) is repeatedly metaphorically connected to Satan, and comes to harbour warm feelings for this figure. Jules Michelet's piece of Romantic history, *La Sorcière*, makes this link even more explicit. However, the first instance of this connection was Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*. Here, Lucifer's only *confidente*—who speaks his peculiar language—is a woman, and the female freedom fighter Cythna, who has taken up his cause of universal liberation, states her intention to end patriarchal oppression of her sex. Moreover, Cythna, who could in a sense be described as Satan's feminist apostle, defies gender roles in her active participation in combat. This text, then, is explicitly both Satanic and feminist, and the two themes are sufficiently intertwined to constitute the earliest specimen of a new phenomenon: Satanic feminism. The American anarchist and feminist periodical *Lucifer*, through its choice of name in combination with a heavy emphasis on women's rights, also disseminated the image of Satan and female emancipation as somehow related.

Satanism was a prominent feature in several works by three of the major English Romantics: Blake, Byron, and Shelley. Especially the latter was

quite persistent in his celebration of Lucifer. The anarchists who took up the motif were equally central names. Out of the four persons usually considered the most influential and famous anarchist thinkers—Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin—three explicitly celebrated Satan as a symbol of freedom and rebellion against unjust authority.[165] These key authors in the realms of Romanticism and anarchism were read all over Europe, and their words reverberate in countless places. One example of this is early Swedish socialism, where Lucifer was a prominent symbol of liberation (both from capitalism and the perceived obscurantism and irrational anti-scientific attitudes of institutionalized Christianity). They also had an impact on a majority of the sources scrutinized throughout this study.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the Romantics were fascinated with religious myth and used its imagery to aesthetic and political effect. A mere negating criticism and deconstruction of myth they left to others of a more strictly rationalistic and logical bent. They were, it seems, far too enamoured by the poetical qualities of myth to get rid of it, even though they loathed repressive religious institutions and their use of myth to legitimate strict moral conservatism and timeworn hierarchies. The answer to this dilemma that authors like Shelley came up with was to engage in protest exegesis, reading the Bible in accordance with a hermeneutic principle of revolt, and thus projecting new values onto these powerful narratives. All the same, such inversions were only occasionally taken all the way (e.g. in *The Revolt of Islam*), and we can for the most part observe the Romantics performing an intricate dance in their balancing of varying parts of drastic revision and acceptance of established readings. Socialists like Bakunin and the Swedish anarchists tended to be more consistent, or perhaps simplistic, in creating counter-myths. Satan, in their retellings, was a cosmic revolutionary with no problematic traits—aside, perhaps, from the fact that this was after all a figure from religious myth that was being infused with a new energy (something that also bothered Shelley at times).

Why, one might ask, did socialists create counter-myths instead of simply completely repudiating the existing variety? Poetic appeal might clearly have played a part, as did, probably, force of habit—both their own and that of their audience. It is not so strange that those socialists who were willing to accept staying within the symbolic framework of Christianity to some extent, perhaps in order to use a language familiar to their readers, chose Satan as their symbol for toppling worldly power, given what the Bible, in certain

passages, has to say about such issues. Especially in Paul, God quite unequivocally appears as the ultimate protector of the existent world order and its rulers. In Romans 13:1–2, for instance, it is famously stated: 'For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.' And who would logically be the greatest adversary of God's ordinance? Satan, of course.

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested several possible reasons for the use of Satan by Romantics and socialists. To summarize: (1) A partly ironic appropriation of Satan ridiculed the conservative view (on display in attacks by conservative poets on their younger peers, as well as in purely political anti-revolutionary propaganda) of the radical and subversive as de facto demonic. (2) Satanist counter-readings of the Bible—where the Devil becomes a noble rebel and Genesis 3 a chronicle of humankind's liberation from slavery to God—served to undermine the authority of Christianity, which according to many radicals had to be jolted out of the populace in order for the latter to rise up against the ruling class. (3) Satan is a colourful figure that helps make the exposition of abstract political ideas easier to grasp and digest. (4) Satanic shock tactics could work as a way to startle the reader into paying attention. (5) Satanism provoked the bourgeoisie and the church and probably instilled fear in some opponents (even those who did not believe in God would likely have found the figure of Satan discomforting). (6) Christian churches had used Satan as a symbol of things they deemed sinful, and thus he became a logical choice of patron for those who would celebrate these things as innocent pleasures. (7) Romantics and socialists grew up in a Christian culture and may have used religious symbols like Satan out of habit or because of a longing for the poetical and persuasive power of religious myth. (8) The language of Christian myth was familiar to the audience and therefore rhetorically convenient to use.

All of the above are fairly plausible partial explanations, but not all will apply to each individual writer or current. Hence, though some general suggestions can indeed be made, it is difficult to distil an all-encompassing explanation for why Satan became such a popular symbol. As we will see, most of the reasons just listed can also be applied to feminist use of Satan as a positive figure. The first point is comparable to how women subverted both the age-old idea of their supposed close relationship to Satan ever since Eve's error in Eden, and more contemporary notions of feminism as literally

or figuratively demonic. The second has parallels in how some feminists saw Christianity as an obstacle that had to be removed for them to be emancipated. Numbers (3)–(5) and (7)–(8) are directly applicable without adjustment. Number (6) would, however, have to be modified slightly. In the feminist context, this point instead pertains to how woman's supposed collusion with Satan in the Garden of Eden had been used by Christian theologians and priests to legitimate the subjugation of all women. Making a hero of Satan therefore makes sense in that it turns this narrative on its head, consequently inverting the misogynist Christian inferences drawn from it. With a benevolent Satan, woman's actions in the Garden become laudable, and woman superior instead of inferior to her husband for being the first to heed Satan's advice. As seen, a reinterpretation of Satan focusing on the Eden narrative can be found among many socialists, such as Bakunin and a number of Swedish left-wing poets and agitators, but there without any specific emphasis on the figure of Eve. In the next chapter, we will consider Madame Blavatsky's rewriting of Genesis 3, and see how feminists, probably directly inspired by Theosophical counter-readings, would direct their full attention to Eve, using a rehabilitated Satan to turn the tables on the established patriarchal reading of Adam's maligned wife.

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[1] Camus [1951]/1984, p. 25.

[2] Milton 1941, p. 155. On Milton's decidedly non-Satanic intentions, see e.g. Lewis 1942/1944, pp. 92–100.

[3] Schock 2003, p. 27.

[4] Abrams 1953/1974, p. 251.

[5] Burke 1889, p. 92.

[6] Burke 1969.

[7] Novalis 2008, p. 386: 'ein revolutionäres Buch gegen die Revolution'.

[8] For a sampling of visual manifestations of such rhetoric, see the propaganda woodcuts in Lehner and Lehner 1971, pp. 156–160.

[9] Schiller 1953, p. 248: 'War er nicht, ein außerordentliches Genie?' *Genie* is here used in the sense of spirit or personage.

[10] Quoted in Praz 1933/1960, p. 76.

[11] Goethe 1957, pp. 83–85. Goethe and Schiller were, as is of course well-known, close friends.

[12] Rudwin 1931/1970, p. 285; Burns 1993, pp. 118–121. Burns also utilizes the motif in the poem 'Address of Beelzebub' (pp. 128–130).

[13] Godwin 1993, p. 146.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Schock 2003, pp. 2, 34.

[16] Wollstonecraft 1792/1986, p. 108.

[17] Schock 2003, pp. 34–35; Paulson 1983, p. 86.

[18] Schock 2003, pp. 172–173. On the 'blasphemous chapels', see McCalman 1988, pp. 146–148. The judge who sentenced one of the blasphemers took precisely such a view of events, and therefore considered words of that nature delivered before an audience of the lower orders to be particularly dangerous. It should be noted that these English revolutionaries gave much prominence to the 'ancient symbol of the levelling Christ' and were often more anticlerical than anti-Christian (pp. 139, 142).

[19] McCalman 1988, pp. 146–147. Quote on p. 146.

[20] In his essay 'Of Choice in Reading', he discusses how a 'tendency' in a text can influence readers more than the author's intended moral of the story. As an example, he mentions *Paradise Lost*, where God, contrary to Milton's intentions, will appear to most readers as a tyrant, according to Godwin. Hence, Satan implicitly becomes the wronged and righteous party. Godwin 1797, p. 135.

[21] Schock 2003, p. 19.

[22] Reproduced in Paulson 1983, p. 192.

[23] Schock 2003, pp. 18–19, 23.

[24] Hazlitt 1930–1934, pp. 63–64.

[25] Shelley 1993, p. 6.

[26] Schock 2003, pp. 115–116.

[27] Shelley 1993, p. 214. For a nuancing of Shelley's view on the existence of God, see Shelley 1908, pp. 803–809 (his notes to *Queen Mab*). He there explains that the declaration 'there is no God' pertains only to the idea of 'a creative Deity'. In contrast, '[t]he hypothesis of a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe remains unshaken' (p. 803).

[28] Shelley 1993, p. 197.

[29] Ibid., pp. 196–199.

[30] Shelley 1908, p. 791.

[31] On this, see Schock 2003, p. 84. At times, Schock's attempts to identify figures from various of Shelley's works (where a literal Devil is not explicitly present) with Satan appear slightly unconvincing. One example of this is the analysis of *The Cenci* (1819), but overall Schock's readings are highly persuasive.

[32] Shelley 1908, p. 201.

[33] Shelley 1993, p. 134.

[34] Shelley 1908, p. 781 (VII, 194–195).

[35] Ibid., pp. 544–545.

[36] Schock 2003, p. 133.

[37] The change of name came about after Shelley's publisher forced him to revise certain provocative parts of the text, especially those indicating that the titular Laon and Cythna were both lovers and brother and sister (on the revision, see Jones 1933 and Shelley's own description of it in a letter in Shelley 1965, vol. 9, p. 269). It has been argued the theme of incest was part of Shelley's feminist program in the text: 'consanguineous love functions as an all-encompassing paradigm of sympathetic communion between the sexes'. Brown 1979, p. 216.

[38] Shelley 1908, p. 40 (Dedication, 103–105). Percy Shelley's feminism also seems to have been inspired by other sources, but Wollstonecraft was definitely the most important one. Brown 1979, pp. 187–188.

[39] Shelley 1908, p. 46 (I. xxv, 347–349).

[40] Ibid., pp. 46–47 (I. xxvii, 361–378).

[41] Ibid., p. 47 (I. xxxi, 403).

[42] For more indications that the serpent is to be understood as Satan, see Haswell 1976, pp. 93–94; Cameron 1941, pp. 201–202.

[43] Kyle Grimes argues that *The Revolt of Islam* was an attempt by Shelley 'to find a discursive form that would allow him both to broadcast his revolutionary political vision to a popular reading audience and (simultaneously) to shield himself from the legal dangers attendant upon such radical political activity'. Grimes 1994, p. 100.

[44] On the possible American inspiration, see Cameron 1941, p. 202.

[45] Shelley 1908, p. 44 (I. xix, 294).

[46] Ibid., p. 50 (I. xlii, 500–501; I. xliii, 505). She further states: 'In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers, / When the dim nights were moonless, have I known / Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers'. Shelley 1908, p. 50 (I. xlvi, 531–534).

[47] Fredrick L. Jones suggests this might reflect the theme from Greek mythology where gods are attracted to mortal women (Jones 1960, p. 31), but in this context it is more likely a reference to the demon lover tradition (which, naturally, in turn also drew on Greek mythology to an extent).

[48] Shelley 1908, p. 50. (I. xlv, 527–529).

[49] According to a letter to his publisher (October 13, 1817), Shelley had modelled the setting on Constantinople and modern Greece, 'but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners' (Shelley 1965, vol. 9, p. 251). In the reworked version of the poem, Laon and Cythna are not siblings.

[50] Cameron 1941, pp. 185–186.

[51] Brown 1979, p. 182.

[52] Martinez 1976, pp. 25–26.

[53] Shelley 1908, p. 62 (II. xxxix, 1010, 1013–1014).

[54] Ibid., p. 63 (II. xlii, 1036–1044).

[55] Ibid., p. 63 (II. xliii, 1045).

[56] Ibid., p. 32.

[57] Ibid., p. 98 (VI. xx–xxi). Martinez (1976, p. 26) also notes the reversal of traditional roles of activity and passivity.

[58] Letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, 26 November 1811. Shelley 1965, vol. 8, p. 205.

[59] Brown 1979, p. 180. The three "forecasts" in question are *The Revolt of Islam, Queen Mab*, and *Prometheus Unbound*.

[60] Shelley 1908, p. 788 (IX, 89–90), p. 248 (III. iv, 153–159).

[61] Brown 1979, p. 181.

[62] Quoted in ibid., p. 181.

[63] Grimes 1994, p. 113.

[64] Budziak 2013, p. 282.

[65] On Blake's involvement with the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church (which he eventually distanced himself from due to its rejection of the political revolution Blake sympathized with), see Vatter 1978, p. 150; Schock 2003, pp. 44–45.

[66] Howard 1970; Schock 2003, pp. 6–7. Peter Thorslev has argued that *The Marriage* is the only text where Blake presents an unambiguous Satanism. Thorslev 1963, p. 260.

[67] Schock 2003, pp. 42–44.

[68] Blake 2008, p. 35,

[69] Ibid., p. 34.

[70] Vatter 1978, pp. 150–151.

[71] Coleridge 1816/1839, p. 24.

[72] Quoted in Schock 2003, p. 123.

[73] Southey 1821, p. xxi.

[74] Schock 2003, pp. 25, 101–103.

[75] Byron 1991, p. 237.

[76] Ibid., p. 275.

[77] Milton 1941, p. 160.

[78] Byron 1986, p. 101.

[79] Thorslev 1963, p. 253.

[80] Ibid., p. 253; Marlowe 1950, p. 17.

[81] Thorslev 1963, pp. 253–256, 267.

[82] Schock 2003, p. 37.

[83] Ibid., p. 38.

[84] Byron 1986, p. 32.

[85] An early but still clarifying discussion is Lovejoy 1948/1955, pp. 228–253.

[86] Cf. Heath 2006; Brown 2001.

[87] Rudwin 1931, p. 286.

[88] On the important part played by the Romantics in processes of religious change, cf. Luijk 2013, p. 103.

[89] Vigny 1986, pp. 10–31. On the tradition of sentimental sympathy, see Rudwin 1931, pp. 285–299.

[90] Hugo 1972, p. 1280.

[91] Sand 1979, p. 285: 'Je ne suis pas le démon, je suis l'archange de la révolte légitime et le patron des grandes luttes. Comme le Christ, je suis le Dieu du pauvre, du faible et de l'opprimé.'

[92] Holmes 1996, p. xvi.

[93] Sand 1979, p. 62: 'C'est toi qui es le diable en personne!'

[94] Ibid., p. 471: 'Tu es le diable! J'ai toujours pensé que tu étais le diable!', 'Un bon diable, croyez-moi, maître.'

[95] Ibid., p. 551: 'Quelle diablesse est-ce là?'

[96] Nonetheless, he was very active during the short period when he was engaged in left-wing struggle. See Hyslop 1976, pp. 273–274.

[97] Of course, this is something of a caricature of Romantic and Decadent Satanism, which are both multi-layered and self-contradictory, but I believe it holds some truth as a general description all the same. Ruben van Luijk has also underscored Baudelaire's function as a transitory figure between two different types of literary Satanism. Lujik 2013, p. 174.

[98] Vincent 1984, p. 53. Proudhon took Michelet's class on French fourteenth- and fifteenth-century history, where the latter would have been likely to present his theories concerning witches as fighters against class oppression.

[99] I have proposed this influence earlier, in Faxneld 2006a, p. 91. As we will see in chapter 6, Michelet's break with Christianity took place only in 1843, but he had begun to think of Satan as connected with Promethean ideals of liberty already in 1825.

[100] Proudhon 1932, pp. 433–434: 'La liberté, symbolisée dans l'histoire de la tentation, est votre anté-christ; la liberté, pour vous, c'est le diable. Viens, Satan, viens, le calomnié des prêtres et des rois, que je t'embrasse, que je te serre sur ma poitrine! Il y a longtemps que je te connais, et tu me connais aussi. Tes œuvres, ô le béni de mon cœur, ne sont pas toujours belles ni bonnes; mais elles seules donnent un sens à l'univers et l'empêchent d'être absurde. … Espère encore, proscrit! Je n'ai à ton service qu'une plume: mais elle vaut des millions de bulletins.' I here take 'bulletins' to refer to the ballots used in voting, but there are other possible translations of the word in this context. It could, among other things, also mean bulletin in the sense of a paper publication.

[101] Proudhon, n.d., p. 7: 'L'esprit d'analyse, Satan infatigable qui interroge et contredit sans cesse'.

[102] Proudhon 1923, p. 307: 'A moi, Lucifer, Satan, qui que tu sois, démon que la foi de mes pères opposa à Dieu et à l'Eglise! Je porterai ta parole, et je ne te demande rien.'

[103] On this positive view of early Christianity, see Vincent 1984, p. 65.

[104] Hyams 1979, pp. 12, 28; Vincent 1984, pp. 72–73.

[105] On this, see Faxneld 2006a, p. 96; Clark 1973, p. 164; Rubin 1980, pp. 51–53, 148–149; Hyslop 1976; Burton 1991, pp. 198–199, 259.

[106] Bakunin 1970, p. 10. I quote from the 1970 English translation.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., p. 12.

[110] Ibid., p. 23.

[111] Ibid., p. 24.

[112] Ibid., p. 25.

[113] Most of the material quoted below can be found in Arbetarrörelsens arkiv ('The workers' movement archive') in Stockholm. For practical reasons, I have not been able to conduct archival research in comparable collections elsewhere, but would like to note this as a desideratum for the future.

[114] For a rare example of Scandinavian esoteric Satanism from roughly the same time period, see the discussion in Faxneld 2011c and Faxneld 2013a concerning Dane Ben Kadosh's (Carl William Hansen, 1872–1936) Luciferian pamphlet, published in 1906. An author that has sometimes been labelled a literary Satanist (even by himself) is August Strindberg (1849–1912), but this is a complicated case, and it is doubtful whether he really presents a positive image of the Devil in the texts in question. On this, see Faxneld 2006a, pp. 134–140.

[115] As when the Bible occasionally (e.g. Rev. 22:16) designates Christ 'the Morning Star', the heavenly body also mentioned in Isaiah 14:2 and there translated as 'Lucifer' in the Vulgate (this passage in Isaiah came to be seen by many theologians, among them Origen, as referring to Satan, which is the reason Lucifer became an alternative name for him).

[116] Key 1905, p. 232: 'det är endast djäfvulen, världen och sitt eget kött de älska, en djäfvul, som ej har ett drag av Lucifer, ej ens av Mefisto utan endast av Belzebub, de surrande intigheternas härskare'. My italics.

[117] Uhlén 1964, pp. 48–49, 53–55.

[118] Ibid., p. 55. Whether Bergegren actually phrased it exactly like this has been strongly questioned, and it may be an example of journalistic creativity more than anything else.

[119] Ibid., pp. 56–57.

[120] Quoted in ibid., p. 96: 'I höjden räddarn vi ej hälsa, / ej gudar, furstar stå oss bi'.

[121] Ibid., pp. 28–32. Wermelin was co-editor of the 1886 and 1887 *Lucifer* publications.

[122] Wermelin 1886, p. 2: 'Du skall icke begära din nästas hustru, så framt hon ej begärer dig ensam, men hans oxe och åsna samt allt kapital honom tillhörer skall du taga ifrån honom och göra till dina bröders egendom.'

[123] Ibid., p. 2: 'Du skall inga andra gudar hava för mig, Ljusbringaren.'

[124] Key 1905, p. 57: 'Saliga äro de stridbara, ty genom dem skola de saktmodiga slutligen kunna lefva på Jorden.'

[125] Wermelin 1887, p. 1: 'I Satans gestalt, i Prometeus' gestalt / Förblef jag densamme—okuflig'.

[126] 'Spartacus' 1891, p. 2: 'Det finns en varelse, som går omkring / Och ställer till blott bråk och ledsamheter. / Förr lär han ha sväfvat fritt i himmelsk ether / Och varit du och bror med herligheter'. The poem has a comical tone in the original Swedish, which is difficult to convey in English. Spartacus is identified as Carleson on p. 68 in the same issue, where we can also learn that he too, like Wermelin, had studied at Uppsala University.

[127] Ibid., p. 3: 'bringa trälar ljus och plågarne förderf'.

[128] Uhlén 1964, p. 48.

[129] For a more thorough analysis of Swedish socialist Satanism, see Faxneld 2006b and Faxneld 2013d.

[130] Carducci 1894. On Carducci's poem, see Faxneld 2006a, pp. 98–100.

[131] 'n' 1907, p. 5: 'Hell dig Satan, / som kunde locka / första kvinnan /till att plocka / kunskapens frukt! / Vad fanns väl innan / vetandets ljus i världen kom?'

[132] Ibid.: 'Men Du Store / Helige Satan, / Mänskoälskarn, / Gudahatarn, / slugare var än / åldrige guden / som ställde upp / de tackfyllda buden'.

[133] Lindorm 1908, p. 15: 'Vi skulle varit lydiga, min gumma / så skulle ännu uti paradiset / som förr vi vandra, saliga och dumma'. The poem was previously published in *Brand* 8, see Lindorm 1907, p. 6.

[134] Schück 1905, p. 11.

[135] Uhlén 1964, p. 290.

[136] Gilman 1995, p. 135.

[137] Chevalier 1932, pp. 24, 186; Bresky 1969, pp. 232–235.

[138] France 1914, p. 293.

[139] Ibid., p. 411: 'en nous et en nous seuls qu'il faut attaquer et détruire Ialdabaoth'.

[140] The situation was somewhat different in the Soviet Union. On this, see Boss 1991, pp. 135–137, 140–152, 235.

[141] This type of individualist anarchism, though taking cues from, for example, Proudhon and Bakunin, was of a libertarian variety, which on certain points even overlapped with conservative ideas concerning the sanctity of private property (Sears 1977, pp. 58–59). Sex radicals can be defined as the nineteenth-century individuals who 'challenged customary beliefs about sexual relationships, the institution of marriage, and women's lack of economic, legal, and social rights' (Passet 2003, p. 2). The emphasis on dissidence in matters pertaining to sexuality (first and foremost when it came to the right of wives to decide for themselves in such matters, rather than be coerced by husbands) and a pronounced scepticism towards the institution of marriage are perhaps the primary features distinguishing sex radicalism from the broader term *feminism*.

[142] Quoted in Sears 1977, p. 55.

[143] Advertisement, for example, in the May 1, 1885, issue of *Lucifer* (pp. 3, 4). *Dieu et l'état* had been published in English in 1883, but I have not been able to ascertain in what month. As already mentioned, *The Kansas Liberal* changed its name in August 1883. Even if the English translation was not published before the name change, Harman may have read the French original or seen the translation earlier, as he was on good terms with Tucker (on Tucker's enthusiasm for Harman's project, see Sears 1977, pp. 63–64).

[144] Quoted in Sears 1977, p. 62.

[145] Ibid., p. 131. His anti-Christian views made Harman adopt an alternative calendar, with the year 1600, when Giordano Bruno was executed for heresy, as its starting point. The first issue of *Lucifer* was thus dated E.M. ('Era of Man') 283 (Passet 2003, p. 46).

[146] Sears 1977, pp. 74–76. On the discussions of marital rape in Lucifer, see also Passet 2003, pp. 143–146.

[147] Sears 1977, pp. 229–231. Quote on p. 231.

[148] Ibid., pp. 148, 246. Quote on p. 246.

[149] *Lucifer*, July 2, 1898, p. 8.

[150] [Anonymous], *Lucifer*, April 7, 1897, pp. 4–5. The article also contains utopian eugenic arguments, which are bound up with the feminist rhetoric.

[151] Sears 1977, p. 100.

[152] Quoted in ibid., p. 115.

[153] Quoted in ibid., p. 269.

[154] Ibid., pp. 119, 134.

[155] Passet 2003, p. 150.

[156] Sears 1977, p. 267.

[157] Passet 2003, p. 56; Sears 1977, p. 99.

[158] Tichenor 1917, pp. 25–26.

[159] Ibid., p. 30. Variations on this opinion are interspersed through the book, for example, on p. 88: 'Jehovah is the proclaimed god of the ruling and robbing classes. He is the god of the landlords, the job-lords and warlords. Satan and his heretics are the rebels of earth.'

[160] Ibid., p. 31.

[161] Ibid., p. 38.

[162] Ibid., p. 87.

[163] Ibid., p. 89.

[164] Ibid., p. 178.

[165] For example, George Crowder identifies these four as the leading representatives of nineteenth-century anarchism in his book *Classical Anarchism* (Crowder 1991, p. 3).

I never saw such a bunch of apple-eaters.

J. D. SALINGER, 'Teddy', in *Nine Stories* (1953)[1]

4

Theosophical Luciferianism and Feminist Celebrations of Eve

INTRODUCTION

In September 1875, the Theosophical Society was founded in New York City. Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), a lawyer and journalist, was elected its first president. Its chief ideologist, however, was one Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) (figure 4.1), who drew authority from the communications concerning esoteric matters she claimed to receive from the mysterious 'Mahatmas' (or 'Masters'). Allegedly with their help, she composed the foundation texts of Theosophy, *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). Both became worldwide bestsellers, and the Society came to occupy a position as the most important international movement of its time in the realm of alternative religiosity.

A fact little discussed by scholars regarding Blavatsky's voluminous (almost 1,500 pages) and vastly influential *The Secret Doctrine* is that it contains passages of unembarrassed and explicit Satanism.[2] While no Satanist *sensu stricto*, this author was certainly a Satanist *sensu lato* (according to my distinction in chapter 1). My argument is that Blavatsky's sympathy for the Devil (which is not quite as peripheral as has been supposed) should be understood not only as part of an esoteric world view, but that we must also consider the political—primarily feminist—

implications of such ideas. As will be demonstrated at the end of the chapter, several prominent feminists were members of the Theosophical Society—or, in some cases, at least enthusiastic readers of Blavatsky. These women, it would appear, drew on Blavatsky's Satanic counter-myth to attack the patriarchal use of traditional Bible readings to keep women in their place. The Theosophical revaluation of Satan furthermore seems to have influenced many of the other feminist source texts discussed later in the present study. Moreover, the reasons these other writers had for making use of a Satanic discourse can potentially be understood better in light of some of the motivations I will here suggest Blavatsky had.

The chapter begins with some background information on Blavatsky as a person, Theosophy as a protest movement and part of a counterculture, and its connections to socialism and feminism. I shall then proceed to scrutinize Blavatsky's celebrations of Satan and try to make sense of them in relation to the aforementioned links as well as to Romantic literature and art, evolutionism, coeval research on Gnosticism, and strategic polemical motives. In particular, the feminist ramifications of Theosophical Satanism are highlighted. Finally, Blavatsky's counter-reading of the Bible is related to a selection of nineteenth-century feminist texts treating Genesis 3, in particular, those from *The Woman's Bible* (2 vols., 1895, 1898), edited by the leading American suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902).

'A BUDDHIST PANTHEIST, IF ANYTHING AT ALL': THE ENIGMATIC MADAME BLAVATSKY

Almost 600 (!) biographies have been written of Blavatsky, but the details of her life, especially the years 1848–73, remain sketchy all the same. Most of the authors writing about her have been either devoted disciples or sharply critical adversaries. Some interesting and well-documented facts are nonetheless discernible. She was born to a noble Russian family in present-day Ukraine, married at 16, ran away only months later, travelled widely and spent time in Cairo, among many other places, where she supported herself as a medium. In the category of details considered doubtful by her detractors, we find Blavatsky's claims to having studied voodoo in New Orleans, crossing the prairie in the company of Native Americans, and spending seven years with the "Masters" in Tibet. Pro-Blavatsky writers contest her adversaries' claims about bigamy, an abandoned infant, and charlatanry. In

1873 she moved to New York City, where the Theosophical Society was founded two years later. Together with Olcott, she relocated to India in 1879, returning to Europe in 1886. She died in London in 1891, famous all over the world as one of the most unconventional and extravagant women of her age. While she was the only one to reach international fame, independent women were common in the family: her mother came to prominence in Russia as a feminist author in the 1840s and her grandmother was a self-taught botanist, both leading lives defying contemporary ideas about appropriate behaviour for women.[3]

Blavatsky was very hostile towards Christianity as an organized religion, though not towards the true esoteric core she claimed it (like all other major religions) possessed. In effect, however, this meant she was harshly critical of the effects of Christianity as a historical phenomenon in the shape of churches as well as of established Christian theology—that is, of all noteworthy past and present manifestations of it. In *The Secret Doctrine*, she writes, 'The esoteric pearl of Christ's religion degraded into Christian theology, may indeed be said to have chosen a strange and unfitting *shell* to be born in and evolved from.'[4] In *Isis Unveiled*, there are chapters with names like 'Christian Crimes and Heathen Virtues' and 'Esoteric Doctrines of Buddhism Parodied in Christianity'. Blavatsky despised the Christian idea of a personal God and underscored that her belief in God should be understood as pantheistic in a Buddhist sense rather than theistic in a Christian sense. Indeed, Blavatsky and Olcott took *pansil* (Pali: *pancha sila*) when they visited Ceylon in May 1880, and she had considered herself a Buddhist already back in New York. In an 1877 letter, for example, she frankly declared: 'I am a Svabhavika, a Buddhist pantheist, if anything at all. I do not believe in a *personal* God, in a direct Creator, or a 'Supreme'; neither do I confess to a *First* cause, which implies the possibility of a *Last* one.'[5] As we shall see, nor did she, accordingly, acknowledge the existence of a personal Satan.

Blavatsky was often perceived as quite a vulgar and coarse person. She swore profusely, dressed garishly, and had a strong sense of irreverent humour. Her New York study was decorated with a stuffed baboon wearing white collar, cravat, and spectacles, carrying a manuscript bundle under his arm labelled 'The Descent of the Species' (in reference to Blavatsky's rejection of Darwin's ideas about man being descended from apes).[6] It is not hard to imagine such a lady deriving considerable pleasure from upsetting

Christians with a pinch of esoteric Satanism. What I shall focus on here, however, is not her personality, though that aspect will not be entirely ignored. Rather, I will highlight connections to the by now familiar ideas about Satan as a liberator that were current in contemporary culture, as well as the ties between Theosophy and radical movements like socialism and feminism, all of which might serve to further our understanding of the cultural logic behind Theosophical Luciferianism and its influence on later feminist polemics.

FIGURE 4.1 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), chief ideologist of the Theosophical Society, who argued that ‘Satan, the enemy of God, is in reality, the highest divine Spirit’. Photo courtesy of the Theosophical Society in America Archives.

‘WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF RACE, SEX, CASTE, OR COLOR’: THEOSOPHICAL COUNTER-DISCOURSE

Unlike the occultism presented earlier by Éliphas Lévi and similar authors, which mostly ended up attracting a small portion of freethinkers, Theosophy quickly became a successful semi-mass movement. In 1889 the Theosophical Society had 227 sections all over the world, and many of the era’s most

important intellectuals and artists were strongly influenced by it. Especially avant-garde painters took this new teaching to heart, and it marked the work of greats like Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Klee. Literary figures like Nobel Prize laureate William Butler Yeats also became members and incorporated Theosophical motifs in their writings.[7] Furthermore, the markedly anticlerical Theosophical Society often allied itself not only with the modernist avant-garde in literature and art but also with purely political currents working towards social and religious liberation, including suffragettes and socialists. Yet, the relationship to such forces of upheaval and reform seems to have been troubled at many times, and there were also elements present within Theosophy that were conservative in most questions other than the religious ones.

As Stephen Prothero (among others) has shown, Theosophy originated in Spiritualism. This fact is important to comprehend its relation to various forms of radicalism, and its internal struggles between elitism and democratic impulses. In Prothero's view, Theosophy began as an attempt by members of an elite to reform the "vulgar" Spiritualism, by many scholars considered a democratic or populist movement, through uplifting its adherents from their ghost seeking into the lofty realms of 'ethically exemplary theorists of the astral planes', as he describes it.[8] It is worth noting that Olcott, in his critique of Spiritualism (written shortly before the founding of the Theosophical Society), reproached it for the presence of 'free-lovers, pantarchists, socialists, and other theorists who have fastened upon a sublime and pure faith as barnacles upon a ship's bottom'.[9] In his first presidential address as the head of the Theosophical Society, in November 1875, Olcott railed against 'tricky mediums, lying spirits, and *revolting social theories*' in Spiritualism.[10] Olcott's own rhetoric proclaimed that the cultivation of noble traits in Theosophists would certainly lead to utopian social transformations, but not along socialist lines.

Blavatsky focused exclusively on the uplifting of oneself rather than others. To Prothero, this is simply 'the difference between Russian aristocracy and metropolitan gentility'.[11] However, it is worth keeping in mind that, for example, Kropotkin and Bakunin both came from noble Russian families, so her attitudes are perhaps not best explained by her family background.[12] Of greater significance, in my opinion, are Blavatsky's strong ties to more traditional and formalized Western esotericism, such as

fringe masonry and hermetic orders. Members of these groups were to a higher degree than Spiritualists non-egalitarian and conservative in orientation, but could simultaneously embrace at least some elements of radicalism and anti-establishment sentiments, which helps explain Blavatsky's at times ambivalent attitude in these matters.[13]

It is amusing in this context to note that Richard Hodgson's 1885 report on Blavatsky, written for the Society for Psychical Research and denouncing her as a fraud, concludes that the true objects of the Theosophical Society were political, and Blavatsky in fact a Russian spy.[14] Now, Blavatsky was hardly a spy for the Tsar; nor was she a socialist, but Theosophy was, to some extent at least, part of a wider radical community. She also had close associates, like Charles Sotheran (1847–1902), who were dedicated socialists.[15] Sotheran was one of the original founders of the Theosophical Society and its first librarian. This is not to say Blavatsky sympathized with socialism at all, and in her scrapbook she even wrote about Sotheran: 'a friend of Communists is not a fit member of our Society'.[16] In spite of her disdain for contemporary socialist activism, she occasionally had kind words in store for more mythical historical examples of it: she praisingly called Jesus 'the great Socialist and Adept'.[17]

Of course, Blavatsky's personal views did not determine the full extent of socialist-Theosophist interaction. Her cosmic concepts could potentially be useful for socialists anyway. For example, the immanentist doctrine formulated by Blavatsky lent itself very well to legitimizing socialist ideas, since her organic vision of a world where all is one clearly challenged atomizing liberal ideas about the state as an association of completely autonomous individuals. The dissolution of boundaries between human beings in esoteric discourse could, as Dixon suggests, be seen as implicitly linked to a political socialist ideal of universal brotherhood and equality.[18] However, it could be argued that Dixon overlooks the fact that a vision of society as an organic unity, though one with hierarchic divisions where some people are the head and others the feet et cetera, is also a classic view among conservatives. Lastly, one can ask, as historian of religions Siv Ellen Kraft does, why Blavatsky, if she was so critical of social reform, and socialism in particular, chose Annie Besant to be her successor, given that the latter's fame rested on her endeavours as a socialist agitator.[19] To summarize, Theosophical interaction with socialism was complex. There

were definitely red sympathizers present within the organization, although Blavatsky and Olcott both rejected such ideas fairly outright. As we shall see, there is still a chance Blavatsky might have been introduced to some of the contemporary mytho-rhetorical tropes of socialism through her associates, which may have influenced her conception of Satan.

The Theosophical Society in its entirety was never officially committed to a political or even philanthropic program. Even so, the central tenet of universal brotherhood tended to be used as a justification for local lodges to work towards improving conditions for the needy, for example, by establishing orphanages and crèches. It is important to keep in mind that this was hardly unique, however, and mainstream religious organizations also engaged in similar activities. The Theosophists' positive attitude to female leadership was more irregular. The prominent position of Blavatsky—and later, to an even greater extent, Annie Besant (who led the organization 1907–1933)—probably furthered the influx of female members who viewed Theosophy as sympathetic towards feminism. The connections to socialist and feminist currents intensified during Besant's reign, and in this period the immanentist theology developed by Blavatsky often became a justification for social reform.[20]

According to historian Joy Dixon, the Theosophical Society under Besant's leadership was, at least in England, 'an important part of a loosely socialist and feminist political culture'.[21] To some extent, this also holds true of the earlier period of the Society's existence. Kraft has demonstrated that there existed a considerable overlap between Theosophy and the women's movement the whole time between 1880 and 1930, especially in England, Australia, the United States, and India.[22] Mary Farell Bednarowski probably exaggerates slightly when she states that there was an explicit concern for equality between the sexes from the very beginning of the Theosophical Society. She makes this claim based on the first objective of the Society, 'to form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, sex, caste, or color'.[23] In fact, the objectives were not formulated until 1878–79, several years after the organization was founded, and sex is not even mentioned in a number of the versions of the objectives, which went through many revisions.[24] Even more important, far from all members seem to have felt that the first objective necessarily implied that equality between the sexes was desirable. However, it is safe to say that Theosophy in many

respects represented a counter-discourse that frequently challenged more or less hegemonic racist, ethnocentric (or even ethno-chauvinist) and sexist values. We should all the same be careful not to idealize these dimensions of the Theosophical project, as we can, for example, often observe problematic colonialist or even blatantly racist attitudes in spite of the respectful universalist rhetoric.[25]

The role of feminism in the Theosophical Society was an ambiguous affair, which involved constant negotiations and battles, making it at times prominent and at times suppressed. For example, arguments were put forward that proper Theosophy was a masculine teaching, unlike the detested Christianity that was sentimental and feminine. We can, for instance, think of feminist Henrietta Müller (1845–1906) who, before joining the Theosophical Society in 1891, wrote to Blavatsky and asked her if women in the organization enjoyed equal rights, and received the answer that they indeed did. Further, Blavatsky assured her that they could, just like men, aspire to the position of Adepts or Mahatmas.[26] In August 1890, Blavatsky wrote in the Theosophical journal *Lucifer* about an 'admirable address' by a leading feminist, F. Fenwick Miller, mentioning that many Theosophists were members of her Women's Franchise League and critiquing the fact that the English woman 'was and still is' a '*thing* and her husband's chattel' rather than 'an independent individual and a citizen'.[27] Later, in 1918, Theosophist Margaret Cousins could write glowingly of Blavatsky: 'Our greatest magician of later times saw no reason for excluding women from priestly office.'[28]

Ultimately, teaching by example was perhaps more important than words in this matter. Blavatsky's solitary journeys before her arrival in New York, which may not have been quite as wide-ranging as she herself made them out to be, were acts of transgression, since it was considered highly unsuitable for a female to travel alone. Her stories about dressing up in men's clothing when needed during these trips, and even taking up arms alongside Garibaldi at the battle of Mentana, further underscore her rejection of traditional womanhood.[29] Indeed, she herself stated plainly, '[T]here is nothing of the woman in me.'[30] A pronounced scepticism towards the institution of marriage—speaking, for instance, of 'the risks of that lottery where there are so many more blanks than prizes'—also made her very much out of tune with Victorian ideals of womanhood.[31] Even if the Masters seemingly gave

spiritual authority to women by selecting Blavatsky as their mouthpiece, the actual views on women expressed in the letters they supposedly wrote mostly consist of flippant remarks (that appear to be half-joking). Yet, since the Masters apparently chose female pupils from the ranks of so-called New Women (independent, but not always explicitly feminist), they thus appear to encourage women to break free from social constrictions to realize their full spiritual potential.[32] Blavatsky would not have considered herself a feminist, and seems to have been distrustful of political reform movements in general. But, as Kraft observes, she still made a feminist contribution, by destabilizing gender categories in words and deeds.[33]

Having established some important background facts, it is now time to examine the Satanist content in Blavatsky's writings, its potential connections to socialism and, most important, its feminist implications.

'THE FATHER OF SPIRITUAL MANKIND': SATAN IN BLAVATSKY'S TWO MAJOR WORKS

The two most widely spread (though perhaps not the most widely read, at least not in their entirety, given how voluminous they are: over 1,200 and almost 1,500 pages, respectively) books by Blavatsky were *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). They were hugely commercially successful, with the first book selling roughly half a million copies up until 1980. Both were written with much help from several collaborators. For *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky was assisted by Olcott, who edited her text heavily and wrote some sections himself. The work on the second book was somewhat similar. The chaotic and utterly disorganized manuscript of several thousand pages, making a pile over three feet high, that she brought with her to London in 1887 was edited into something manageable by Archibald and Bertram Keightley in cooperation with a number of other young Theosophists. The junior scientist Ed Fawcett helped with quotations and wrote many pages for the sections on science.[34] Both of these works are thus collaborative efforts. However, I have found no mention of anyone else having been specifically involved with the passages where Blavatsky reinvents various biblical narratives and praises Satan, and shall hence here assume they were written more or less by her alone.

Academic commentators have frequently remarked on the incoherence and abstruseness of Blavatsky's books, while Theosophists tend to claim there is actually an underlying common thread to be found—at least for the initiated.

Even in a scholarly context, some have taken an extremely sympathetic stance concerning the coherency of Blavatsky's texts. Emily B. Sellon and Renée Weber write:

> Works like *The Secret Doctrine* are so full of ambiguities, digressions, and overlapping symbologies that they bewilder and frustrate the casual reader. The use of paradox and symbolic language as a valid method for conveying truth is, however, central to the theosophical epistemology, which regards the awakening of intuition (*buddhi*) as essential to spiritual growth.[35]

While the texts will admittedly begin to make more sense the deeper one penetrates into the symbolic world of Blavatsky, they still contain a great deal of confusion that surely does not lie solely with the uninitiated reader. Therefore, the following discussion does not attempt to extract a totally consentient doctrine from the texts. Instead, the contradictions and uncertainties are brought to the fore as much as the instances of identifiable underlying structures of thought.

Already in *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky discussed the Devil in some detail. Her chapter about this entity here is, however, mostly a sarcastic exposé over the beliefs held by Christians concerning the Devil, which she found singularly ridiculous. There is no celebration worth mentioning of the figure.[36] The only tendency in that direction is a short encapsulation—half a page in a fifty-six-page chapter—of a Kabalistic view of Satan as a blind antagonistic force, that is necessary for the good principle's vitality, development, and vigour.[37] Satan is also mentioned in a handful of other places in this book, outside of the chapter dedicated to him, but in most instances what we find are variations of phrasings like 'the existence of the Devil is a fiction, which no theology is able to demonstrate'.[38] In the eleven years between this work and her celebrated *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky changed her view of several things. Earlier on, she dismissed the concept of reincarnation, but now she instead staunchly advocated it.[39] Satan, too, is seen in an entirely different way. She now affords him two chapters instead of one, and he becomes an explicitly positive symbol.

According to Blavatsky, Satan—or Lucifer, or the Devil, as she often uses the names interchangeably—brought mankind spiritual wisdom and is 'the spirit of Intellectual Enlightenment and Freedom of Thought'.[40] Like, for example, Shelley and many socialists, she draws a parallel between Satan and Prometheus.[41] Satan's function as a culture hero in the same spirit as the Greek Titan is evident in the Bible, she claims, provided it is read correctly:

> [I]t is but natural—even from the dead letter standpoint—to view *Satan*, the Serpent of Genesis, as the real creator and benefactor, the Father of Spiritual mankind. For it is he who was the 'Harbinger of Light', bright radiant Lucifer, who opened the eyes of the automaton *created* by Jehovah, as alleged; and he who was the first to whisper: 'in the day ye eat thereof ye shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil'—can only be regarded in the light of a Saviour. An 'adversary' to Jehovah the '*personating* spirit', he still remains in esoteric truth the ever-loving 'Messenger' (the angel), the Seraphim and Cherubim who both *knew* well, and *loved* still more, and who conferred on us spiritual, instead of physical immortality—the latter a kind *of static* immortality that would have transformed man into an undying 'Wandering Jew'.[42]

This is a Gnostic-Satanic counter-reading of Genesis 3 that is strangely at odds with Blavatsky's overall cosmology. Elsewhere, she clearly states there is no creator God, and no opposition between God and Satan, both of which are but powers within man himself, each useful in its own right.[43] All this is contradicted in the passage just quoted, where God created man, Satan freed us from the shackles of this demiurge and both are, oddly, much like sentient personages with an independent existence.

The description of events in Genesis 3 needs, Blavatsky says, to be interpreted allegorically in order for the core of true events to be discerned behind the veils of mythical ornamentation. There can be no doubt that Blavatsky views the figure of Satan in this narrative as an unequivocally good force, a helper and friend of mankind:

> 'Satan', once he ceases to be viewed in the superstitious, dogmatic, unphilosophical spirit of the Churches, grows into the grandiose image of one who made of *terrestrial a divine* man; who gave him, throughout the long cycle of Maha-kalpa the law of the Spirit of Life, and made him free from the Sin of Ignorance, hence of death.[44]

'FOR THE INTELLECTUAL INDEPENDENCE OF HUMANITY': ASTRAL LIGHT AND THE PRINCE OF ANARCHY

When quoting Éliphas Lévi's connecting of Satan and anarchism in a passage from his *Histoire de la Magie* ('The History of Magic', 1860), Blavatsky touches briefly upon the political dimension of celebrating Lucifer. In the quotation as given by her, Lévi seems to give praise to the fallen angel and proclaims that Satan was 'brave enough to buy his independence at the price of eternal suffering and torture; beautiful enough to have adored himself in full divine light; strong enough to reign in darkness amidst agony, and to have built himself a throne on his inextinguishable pyre'. This figure, 'the Satan of the Republican and heretical Milton', Lévi lastly designates 'the prince of

anarchy, served by a hierarchy of pure Spirits'. Blavatsky adds '(!!)' to the mention of pure spirits serving the Devil.[45] She then comments:

> This description—one that reconciles so cunningly theological dogma and the Kabalistic allegory, and even contrives to include a political compliment in its phraseology—is, when read in the right spirit, quite correct. Yes, indeed; it is this grandest of ideals, this ever-living symbol—nay apotheosis—of self-sacrifice for the intellectual independence of humanity; this ever active Energy protesting against Static Inertia—the principle to which Self-assertion is a crime, and Thought and the *Light of Knowledge* odious. … But Eliphas Levi was yet too subservient to his Roman Catholic authorities; one may add, too jesuitical, to confess that this devil was mankind, and never had any existence on earth outside of that mankind.[46]

Blavatsky here misrepresents or possibly misreads Lévi, even though she does describe him as being ironic.[47] In fact, what Lévi does is simply to relate a conception of Satan supposedly held by Milton, which he deems completely erroneous, himself describing the figure as 'the false Lucifer of heterodox legend'.[48] Lévi calling Milton a republican and a heretic is not intended as a compliment, and the same goes for the labelling of Satan as 'the prince of anarchy'—Lévi himself, having long-since abandoned the socialist ideas he held in his youth, was more or less conservative by the time he wrote this book.[49] It is interesting that Blavatsky, usually no friend of socialism, here for some reason evidently thinks it 'a political compliment' to be the lord of the anarchists. Even so, it seems highly unlikely that she would have read the socialist publications Lévi wrote under his own name, before he embarked on his career as an esoteric author.

Lévi certainly did not advocate an esoteric Satanism, but—as discussed in chapter 2—Satan is interpreted in some of his works as identical with what he called the astral light. This force pervades the entire universe and can be used for both good and evil purposes.[50] He hereby somewhat relativized the understanding of the figure among occultists and prepared the way for Blavatsky's more straightforward pro-Satanic speculations. Lévi was one of her most important sources of inspiration, and in *Isis Unveiled* he is the most prominent reference (quoted on no less than thirty-three separate occasions), as has been pointed out by several scholars.[51] In *The Secret Doctrine*, Lévi remains important at least for the conception of Satan, even if Blavatsky criticizes the French magus for trying to reconcile his ideas with the dogma of the Catholic Church. Blavatsky placed no such constraints upon herself. Her celebration of Lucifer the liberator goes much farther than Lévi's

ambiguous notion of Satan as the astral light. Yet this basic concept still largely underlies her understanding of the Devil as an impersonal force permeating man and cosmos, rendering both dynamic and assuring they are constantly evolving.

Aside from Lévi, another important building block of the Blavatskian *Weltanschauung* was contemporary (semi-) scholarly understandings of ancient Gnosticism. Among the books Blavatsky drew most heavily on (and at times even stole—that is, quoted without mentioning the words were not her own—entire passages from verbatim) when she wrote *Isis Unveiled* was C. W. King's *The Gnostics and Their Remains* (1864, revised ed. 1887). As Campbell has pointed out, the term *gnosis* is consistently prominent in her technical vocabulary.[52] Gnosticism plays an important part in *The Secret Doctrine* as well, and King is referenced in the discussion of Satan.[53] In King's account of Gnostic ideas there is little support for a positive view of Satan, and maintaining the later Christian identification of the serpent in Eden with the Devil, which the Gnostics did not adhere to, is Blavatsky's own initiative. In spite of such divergences, she explicitly points to the Gnostics as the best source if one wants to understand the true meaning of the supposedly evil powers symbolized by the dragon, the serpent, and the goat.[54] The Christian Church has of course completely misunderstood their significance:

> that which the clergy of every dogmatic religion—pre-eminently the Christian—points out as Satan, the enemy of God, is in reality, the highest divine Spirit—(occult Wisdom on Earth)—in its naturally antagonistic character to every worldly, evanescent illusion, dogmatic or ecclesiastical religions included.[55]

Satan fulfils an indispensable function not only for mankind but also for God, Blavatsky claims: 'God is light and Satan is the necessary darkness or *shadow* to set it off, without which pure light would be invisible and incomprehensible.'[56] This is not to say Satan is God's adversary, she states, since they are in a sense one, identical, or two sides of the same coin.[57] Blavatsky also insists on the unity of Jehovah and the serpent that tempted Eve. They are one and the same, and only the ignorance of the Church Fathers has degraded the serpent into a devil.[58] These might seem like unnecessary points to make for a monist, to whom, of course, everything is ultimately one. But this monist is a strong believer in evolution. Everything being one does not entail that stasis is desirable, and for evolution to run its course there is a

need for (seemingly) antagonistic forces. Satan and evil, she proposes, have an important part to play in evolution: 'Evil is a necessity in, and one of the supporters of the manifested universe. It is a necessity for progress and evolution, as night is necessary for the production of Day, and Death for that of Life—*that man may live for ever*.'[59] Given the strong focus on evolution in Theosophy, it is also unsurprising that the development in man set in motion by the Fall should be considered something positive. In the Theosophical cosmology, the nature of the universe is forward motion.[60] Breaking free from stasis, disrupting equilibrium by eating the forbidden fruit, is therefore logically a fortunate event.

The creature causing this event seems to have been man himself, with no help from an *external* serpent or Satan. Blavatsky explicitly denies the existence of Satan 'in the objective or even subjective world (in the ecclesiastical sense)'.[61] That Satan does not exist in the ecclesiastical sense does not mean he lacks existence. Blavatsky simply locates him elsewhere than in a fiery Hell: 'Satan, or the Red *Fiery* Dragon, the "Lord of Phosphorus" (brimstone was a theological improvement), and *Lucifer*, or "Light-Bearer", is in us: it is our *Mind*—our tempter and Redeemer, our intelligent liberator and Saviour from pure animalism.'[62] Blavatsky states that 'esoteric philosophy shows that man is truly the manifested deity in both its aspects—good and evil'.[63] God and Satan are thus both aspects contained within man himself (and here we can discern a parallel to the Romantics' relocation of the divine to mankind). They are still directly connected to a transcendent sphere, and Blavatsky explains that Satan is 'the emanation of the very essence of the pure divine principle *Mahat* (Intelligence), which radiates direct from the *Divine mind*'. Without Satan, 'we would be surely no better than animals'.[64]

A rather jarring discrepancy is obviously present in Blavatsky's image of Satan. While the figure is described in a monist fashion as synonymous with Jehovah (who in turn is an aspect of man himself), he is—as we have seen—elsewhere depicted more as a noble rebel against an unjust God, both of whom are described as conscious separate entities. That symbolic language is being used does not quite account for this inconsistency, as even such discourse can be expected to adhere to a certain minimum of internal logic. As for her monism, it would have to be of a rather mitigated variety for the dichotomies and antagonisms to be given such a prominent place in the

cosmology. Moreover, monism is not stressed at all in the passages most ardently celebrating Satan and attacking God as a cosmic dictator.

'AN ASSERTION OF FREE-WILL AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT': DEBATING THE DEVIL IN *Lucifer*

Blavatsky's sympathy for the Devil was evinced even before the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*. From September 1887 onwards, Blavatsky published a journal in England named *Lucifer*. The initiation of this project can be seen as part of the ongoing power struggle between her and Olcott, and it was to serve as an alternative to the periodical under his control, *The Theosophist*.[65] She emphasized that the name of her journal was absolutely not purely Satanic, though there can be little doubt that the name was chosen partly in order to provoke Christian churches and other ideological opponents. The strikingly positive view of Satan presented the next year by Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* also makes it obvious a double entendre was to some extent intended. In the editorial for the first issue, Blavatsky (who, judging by the style, was almost certainly the author) dismisses the misunderstandings surrounding the name Lucifer as being exclusively infernal and claims that, hence, 'the title for our magazine is as much associated with divine and pious ideas as with the supposed rebellion of the hero of Milton's "Paradise Lost" '.[66] But in the same editorial she also writes about Satan in 'Milton's superb fiction' that if one analyses his rebellion, 'it will be found of no worse nature than an assertion of free-will and independent thought, as if Lucifer had been born in the XIXth century', in other words practically presenting Satan as a freedom fighter.[67] It seems she also figured the shock value of the name could serve a pedagogical purpose: 'to force the weak-hearted to look truth straight in the face, is helped most efficaciously by a title belonging to the category of branded names'.[68]

Lucifer
A
THEOSOPHICAL MONTHLY
DESIGNED
To bring "to light the hidden things of darkness."
EDITED BY
H. P. Blavatsky and Mabel Collins
The Light-bearer is the Morning Star or Lucifer; and "Lucifer is no profane or Satanic title. It is the Latin Lucifera, the Light-bringer, the Morning Star, equivalent to the Greek φωσφόρος . . . the name of the pure, pale herald of daylight."—YONGE

FIGURE 4.2 Cover of the first issue of the Theosophical journal *Lucifer*, September 1887. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society in America Archives.

A debate initiated by a letter from Reverend T. G. Headley in the August 1888 issue of *Lucifer* sheds some additional light on the ideas about Satan that were propagated in the Theosophical Society and more specifically in the journal in question (figure 4.2). Headley argues that the priests of Jesus's time caused the son of God to be slain as a devil. The priests then proceeded to appropriate the figure of Christ and establish various false doctrines in his name. The ones most properly labelled devils are therefore these priests. But we must be careful, Headley warns, not to dethrone Christ in our struggle against the devilish priests. The editors simply respond that they agree Christ should indeed be honoured, as an initiate, while Catholicism and Protestantism should be rejected.[69] One Thomas May felt moved to submit a reply focusing on the Devil instead. In his letter, he endeavours to explain how 'the much-abused Devil may be transformed into an angel of Light'.[70] He asserts that the serpent in the Garden of Eden should be seen as corresponding to the brazen serpent lifted up by Moses, a creature with whom May claims Jesus identifies himself. By a somewhat spurious etymology, to put it mildly, he establishes that Satan and God are one and the same, and supports this by stating that 'Serpent worship was universal and symbolical of Wisdom and Eternity'. The basis for the argument is ultimately a metaphysical monism, where there is only one God, though men have given him various names like 'Jupiter, Pluto, Dionysus, God, Devil, Christ, Satan'.[71]

Headley retorted, refuting May's line of reasoning and ending his letter with the words: '[I]t is not true, as Mr. May asserts, that good and evil, or Jesus and the Devil, are one and the same.'[72] The editor, however, took May's side, and affirmed that, indeed, '[t]he "Supreme", if IT is infinite and omnipresent, cannot be anything but that. IT must be "good and evil", "light and darkness", etc'.[73] The opportunity was also seized to attack the notion of a personal God and Satan, in spite of Headley having mentioned nothing about subscribing to such a view of the Devil. Headley replied again, this time complaining that he felt he had been misrepresented in the debate as believing in the existence of a personal Devil.[74] The editorial rejoinder to this was signed H.P.B., instead of simply 'The Editor' (though it seems likely she wrote the earlier ones as well), as if to lend extra weight to the points she makes. She brushes aside the question of Headley being made out to believe in a personal Devil and underscores that the important thing is that

such stupid religious superstition is torn down, this endeavour being the very purpose of *Lucifer*, a magazine that is 'essentially controversial'.[75] Blavatsky then expresses her agreement with May's analysis concerning Jesus and Lucifer being the same, and concurs firmly with the monism that underpins it.[76] May, just like Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*, completely demolishes the traditional view of Satan and reinvents the figure as a perennially misunderstood manifestation of The Supreme. Exactly what this figure is, if not a personal entity, is not specified by May.

The suggestions about Satan made by May cannot have had any influence on Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, since the book was published only a month later.[77] Nothing similar is to be found in *Isis Unveiled*, and I have not managed to find these ideas in any other Theosophical text published in the interval between Blavatsky's two major books. Therefore, these interpretations must either have been disseminated orally within the society, Blavatsky perhaps directly or indirectly even being the source of May's ideas, or they might have come from an external source. We shall now proceed to look at some possible such sources in the broader contemporary pro-Satan discourse prevalent among certain socialists and radical artists and authors.

BLAVATSKY'S SATAN AND DIABOLICAL SOCIALISM, ART, AND ROMANTICISM

Blavatsky's closeness to champions of the proletariat like Charles Sotheran makes it likely she was aware of the use of Satan as a symbol of political liberation in texts by socialists such as Bakunin and Proudhon. In particular, Bakunin's *Dieu et l'état*, which describes Satan as a gnosis-bringer and makes a positive reinterpretation of the events in the Garden of Eden, could be a potential source of inspiration. Blavatsky's new version of this myth is very similar to the one presented by Bakunin.

As for the name of Blavatsky's journal, we can note that the individualist-anarchist weekly newspaper published in Kansas (later in Chicago) called *Lucifer the Light-bearer* had already started publication in 1883 (see chapter 3), four years prior to Blavatsky's similarly titled endeavour. We also saw in chapter 3 that Lucifer was being used as a name for socialist publications elsewhere as well. The early Swedish Social Democrats disseminated coarse propaganda leaflets bearing this title in December 1886 and April 1887, and then in 1891 started a more lavish magazine using the

same name. Blavatsky was hardly aware of these obscure Swedish publications, but may have been familiar with the American one. What is interesting is that the figure of Lucifer—sometimes, but most often not, completely divorced from the concept of the Devil—was clearly well-established as a symbol of liberation in the radical circles where some of Blavatsky's closest associates moved.

The premier issue of Blavatsky's journal featured a cover drawing of a comely and noble torch-wielding Lucifer that is extremely similar to that which adorns the Christmas 1893 issue of *Lucifer: Ljusbringaren* published by the Swedish Social Democrats (an image of which can be found in chapter 3). Either the socialists copied the Theosophists' artwork, or they both have an older image as their model. The latter alternative does not seem inconceivable, as the figure on both covers closely resembles the heroic Satan in various Romantic works of art, such as Joseph Geefs's *L'Ange du mal* (marble sculpture, 1842), James Barry's *Satan and his Legions Hurling Defiance Toward the Vault of Heaven* (etching, 1792–94), and Richard Westall's *Satan Alarm'd ... Dilated Stood* (stipple engraving, 1794).[78] This iconographic similarity embeds the Theosophical journal in an artistic context where Satan is glorified as beautiful, knight-like, and majestic.

Of course, Blavatsky, like any other well-read person in the late nineteenth century, was also familiar with the main works of English Romantic Satanists like Byron and Shelley. In her writings, she refers to these authors several times.[79] In an 1882 article she also discusses Italian author Giosué Carducci's anticlerical poem 'Inno a Satana' (composed in 1863, published 1865), which is perhaps one of the most programmatic and explicit examples of the tropes of Romantic Satanism.[80] It is obvious Blavatsky's conception of Satan draws on that of the Romantics, at least on a general level. They too, in some of their works, viewed him as a symbol of independence, defiant rebellion, and liberation from oppression. Her originality lies in integrating this view into an esoteric system.

'THE REAL MEANING OF THOSE PARTICULAR CHAPTERS': BLAVATSKY'S FEMINIST COUNTER-READING?

As seen, academic studies of Theosophy have called attention to a considerable overlap between feminist currents and this new religious movement. Remarkably, however, no one has explored the feminist

implications of Blavatsky's counter-reading of Genesis 3. Mary Farrell Bednarowski has argued that there are four factors that characterize marginal religious groups that offer leadership roles for women:

> (1) a perception of the divine that deemphasizes the masculine, (2) a tempering or denial of the doctrine of the Fall, (3) a denial of the need for a traditional ordained clergy, and (4) a view of marriage which does not hold that marriage and motherhood are the only acceptable roles for women.[81]

In her analysis, she examines how these views are expressed in Shakerism, Spiritualism, Christian Science, and Theosophy.[82] Of course, a reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Fall is central to Blavatsky's Satanism and receives a detailed treatment in *The Secret Doctrine*. Oddly enough, the view of the Fall in Theosophy is not explored at all in Bednarowski's article, though she discusses this point in relation to some of the other groups under scrutiny. Further on I will examine how this particular narrative was a central concern among the feminists of the time, who especially focused on attacking the notion of knowledge as potentially evil. The importance of Genesis 3 in the feminist context makes it particularly interesting to see how Theosophical texts deal with the serpent's offer of knowledge. Bednarowski highlights how the Garden of Eden narrative has historically served to 'prove' the moral weakness of women and has been instrumental in excluding women from positions of religious power.[83] Blavatsky's view of the Fall as a positive, gnosis-bringing event thus implicitly becomes an up-valuation of woman: she is no longer responsible for mankind's fall into sin but is instead actively involved in the gaining of spiritual wisdom from the benevolent snake. Perhaps there were political-feminist reasons for Blavatsky to view the Fall thus. As a female religious leader bringing esoteric wisdom to mankind, she had every reason to want to smash the old negative view of Eve and the Tree of Wisdom.[84]

In the article 'The Future of Women', published in the October 1890 issue of *Lucifer*, the feminist activist Susan E. Gay argues that women and men are but souls temporarily incarnated in female or male bodies, and that even in a particular lifetime many women are more male than some men and vice versa. It is therefore inappropriate to impose special restrictions of any kind on women. 'The *true* ideal in both sexes', she writes, 'is realised in those exceptional but grand characters which possess the best and noblest qualities of both, and who have attained the spiritual equilibrium of duality.'[85] The

blame for the continuing oppression of women is laid at the door of the church. In this context, Gay brings up the question of the Fall in an interesting way. She relates how a member of the House of Commons quoted Genesis 3:16 ('Thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee'), where Eve is cursed by God, in a debate and was cheered by his colleagues. Since she is writing for a Theosophical audience well-acquainted with Blavatsky's counter-readings of the Bible in *The Secret Doctrine*, she then states: '[I]f the honourable members had been enlightened with regard to the real meaning of those particular chapters dealing with the fall and fate of our race, they might possibly have refrained from such a profound exhibition of ignorance.'[86] What she has in mind is clearly the Blavatskian view of the serpent as a benevolent entity, a bringer of wisdom, and Eve as thus implicitly anything but a cursed creature.

Even if Blavatsky had not explicitly connected this with feminism, some of her adherents obviously did and incorporated it into their polemics, which combined esoteric Bible interpretations with political agitation. As Kraft concludes regarding the unconventional lifestyle of women like Blavatsky, even that which is not intended as contributions to a feminist struggle may lend powerful support to it.[87] This, as we can see, applies equally well to the creation of a counter-myth, which crushes conventional interpretations of a biblical narrative commonly used to legitimize the subjection of women.

The editors of *Lucifer* themselves expressly targeted exoteric Christianity as a hindrance to women's emancipation, and in an August 1890 editorial it is argued that demanding franchise reform for females while at the same time attending churches that oppose freedom for women is like 'boring holes through sea-water'.[88] 'It is', the editorial states, addressing Christian suffragettes, 'not the laws of the country that they should take to task, but the Church and chiefly themselves.'[89] Given such rhetoric, it is hardly far-fetched to imagine that one of several intentions behind Blavatsky's pro-Satan subversion of Christian myths may have been to liberate women from the oppression the original symbolic structures had been made to serve.

Blavatsky's esoteric ideas in general also attended to the theme of gender —by denying its ultimate reality. For Blavatsky, 'esotericism ignores both sexes' and spiritual development through a series of incarnations ultimately led to the emergence of a spiritual androgyne, a 'Divine Hermaphrodite'.[90] It is tempting to suggest the Theosophical concept of the Divine Hermaphrodite

was somehow related to Éliphas Lévi's hermaphroditic Devil-figure Baphomet, which in turn was based on older Christian iconography portraying Satan as a being of mixed sex.[91] While she surely knew this image, and Lévi's theories concerning the figure it portrays, there are only five very brief references to Baphomet in Blavatsky's writings. This does not rule out that Lévi's concept of a two-sexed symbol of enlightenment can have influenced her thinking on gender.[92] Explicit connections between the hermaphrodite as a spiritual ideal, Luciferianism, and Baphomet are, however, not to be found in Blavatsky's works, in spite of how logical a link between them would seem.

Kraft has made the remarkable suggestion that Blavatsky herself might have been a physical hermaphrodite. Blavatsky claimed to have been a virgin all her life in spite of two marriages, and there is even a doctor's certificate to support the assertion that due to injuries sustained from a fall from horseback—resulting in her having, as she put it in a letter, 'all her guts out, womb and all'—she would not have been able to have physical relations with any man. In this letter she further says she is 'lacking something and the place is filled with some crooked cucumber'. Kraft interprets this as a possible reference to hermaphroditism.[93] For this condition to have been caused by a riding accident seems somewhat strange, however. It could, of course, be an explanation Blavatsky for some reason provided to account for circumstances present since birth. Regardless of the shape of her actual genitals, it is noteworthy that she rejected traditional womanhood, portrayed herself as an androgyne, and signed her personal correspondence 'Jack'. Olcott, who described her as a 'she-male' in his diary, also called her Jack, as did other close friends.[94] At times, she spoke of an 'indweller', an 'interior man', who could be considered either her higher consciousness or the overshadowing spirit of one of her mysterious Masters.[95] Blavatsky's masculinization of herself can be viewed as problematic from a feminist perspective, though it should be noted that feminist appraisals of androgynity and the appropriation of male traits by females have varied widely through time. Given such fluctuations, it seems reasonable to simply conclude, as Kraft does, that Blavatsky did make a feminist contribution by destabilizing gender roles.[96]

The fondness for dissolving gender categories also extended beyond Blavatsky herself, to other members' reimaginings of mythical figures. In the

October 1887 issue of *Lucifer*, Gerald Massey contributed a poem titled 'The Lady of Light', where he implores: 'Illumine within, as without, us, / Lucifer, Lady of Light!'[97] And further:

> With the flame of thy radiance smite
> The clouds that are veiling the vision
> Of Woman's millennial mission,
> Lucifer, Lady of Light!'[98]

In a footnote, he explains that 'every god and goddess of the ancient pantheons is androgynous' and that 'our Lucifer' is identical with Venus, Istar, and Astoreth. Linking this androgynous/female Lucifer to traditionally 'evil' biblical symbols, he ascertains she is the star Wormwood that St. John observes falling to earth in Revelation 8:10.[99] Maintaining an association between Lucifer and 'evil' phenomena whilst feminizing the figure interestingly conjures the image of a Theosophical Satan given womanly features, which might be related to Blavatsky's implicit and explicit up-valuation of both (the importance attached to a Divine Hermaphrodite transcending all earthly gender categories should, of course, not be forgotten either).

H.P. BLAVATSKY, SATANIC FEMINIST?

Let us now review our findings concerning Blavatsky and Theosophical conceptions of Lucifer. First, it is clear that the celebrations of Satan are not a key theme in *The Secret Doctrine*. In total, the passages in question do not constitute a substantial part of the almost 1,500 pages of the two volumes. If we consult the index of a fourteen-volume edition of her collected works (which does not include, it is worth noting, *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*), the references to Satanism, the Devil, Lucifer, and Satan take up about one and a half pages. This we can then compare to the references to Buddha and Buddhism, which fill over six pages in the index, while the list of references to Christ and Jesus take up a little over four pages. Used in this manner an index is admittedly a rather blunt tool, and we should refrain from overstating the importance of the frequency of occurrence of certain words. It still does say something, and wide reading of Blavatsky's works seems to bear this "statistical" tendency out. If a figure from religious myth holds a

special and prominent position above all others in Blavatsky's writings it is undoubtedly the Buddha.[100] Thus, it would be absurd to label Blavatsky a Satanist *sensu stricto*, as my definition of such Satanism stipulates that Satan must hold the most prominent place in the system in question.[101] All the same, it remains clear that her probably most influential book contains a fair amount of explicit celebrations of Satan, and that this is one of the first instances of such unequivocal praise being heaped on the figure in an esoteric context rather than in the realm of politics or Romantic and Decadent literature.

Some might object to describing the passages in Blavatsky's works discussed in this chapter as "Satanist" even *sensu lato*, perhaps by arguing she reinterprets the figure so radically that it is not actually the Christian Satan she is praising. However, this is the case with most Satanists in all times: the figure they hail is seldom merely a straight reflection of the character from Christian tradition, but is as good as always a very differently perceived entity. In this particular case, the figure remains tied to traditional narratives like the Fall, even if these are viewed in an idiosyncratic way. It can hardly be denied that Blavatsky, in a pioneering manner, applied established tropes of political and literary Satanism in an esoteric context and was thus instrumental in creating a shift in how the figure came to be viewed by esotericists. She exerted a great influence on later esotericists who constructed Satanic systems, like Ben Kadosh (Carl William Hansen, 1872–1936), Gregor A. Gregorius (Eugen Grosche, 1888–1964) and Pekka Siitoin (1944–2003). In fact, one might say that their understanding of Satan is more or less directly traced to Blavatsky's. To a lesser extent, she may also have inspired how, for example, Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927) perceived the Devil.[102]

Theosophists themselves seem to have taken fairly little notice of her positive view of Satan. Perhaps it simply did not fit in well enough with her general "system", if that is an appropriate word for the often confusing and contradictory world view Blavatsky presented, and was therefore ignored as irrelevant. Perhaps it was deemed too provoking and hence rejected as inappropriate to acknowledge. Whatever the explanation, it is more surprising that Theosophy's enemies do not seem have paid much attention to it either. Satanism would, of course, have been the perfect brush with which to tar Blavatsky if one wanted to vilify her, but this tactic was to the best of my knowledge not really employed.

Having established that Blavatsky was no Satanist *sensu stricto*, what were then her motives for celebrating Satan? This chapter has suggested several possible reasons. Potentially, feminist (at the very least her ideas definitely had feminist implications) or legitimizing (a legitimacy specific to her as a woman) incitements might have played a part, since a "Satanist" undermining of the myth of the Fall, which was used by Christians to "prove" women's moral weakness and spiritual inferiority, helped strengthen Blavatsky's position as a female religious leader. At the time *The Secret Doctrine* was written, there was also a considerable overlap between Theosophy and the women's movement. A rejection of the idea of woman as sinful would hence find a receptive audience among many members. The Fall was a much-debated issue among feminists, and the rehabilitation of Eve implicit in *The Secret Doctrine* would have been most welcome in such circles. To Blavatsky, the shock value of Satanism could moreover serve a pedagogical function: 'to force the weak-hearted to look truth straight in the face', as she put it. One such truth could be the important role played by Christianity in keeping women down. Additionally, Satanist counter-readings of the Bible obviously helped undermine the authority of Christianity, the shattering of which was a basic prerequisite for the whole Theosophical project.

We must also be careful to situate Blavatsky's organization in the political landscape of its time. Theosophy was part of a continuum of progressive agendas, which included feminism, socialism, vegetarianism, anti-imperialism, and anti-war efforts.[103] Many individuals participating in these efforts were anticlerical or even anti-Christian.[104] Blavatsky's pro-Satan provocations fit well in this context. Similar outbursts were an established part of some types of socialist discourse, and she may have been aware of socialists like Bakunin and Proudhon using Satan as a symbol of liberation.

Another important factor to consider is the influence of evolutionism on Theosophy, even if its exoteric form as proposed by Darwin was repudiated. Breaking free from stasis, by eating the fruit offered by Satan, is logically a fortunate event to someone who views the cosmos as evolving ever upwards spiritually. To Blavatsky, who was more or less a monist, not only the Fall but also Satan and "evil" are important for spiritual evolution, which needs (seemingly) antagonistic forces to be dynamic. Several other influences should also be considered. For example, Blavatsky, inspired by King's book on Gnosticism, interpreted the Gnostics (that she held in high regard) as

Satanists of a sort. Éliphas Lévi's view of Satan makes the figure a more or less morally neutral force that can also be used for good and prepares the way for Blavatsky's more radical positive re-imagining. The broader non-esoteric cultural environment would have further stimulated this development. For instance, pictorial representations of a noble, beautiful Satan were quite common in Romantic art, and Blavatsky was familiar with some of the prime exponents of Romantic literary Satanism: Shelley, Byron, and Carducci. All these factors would have given praise of Lucifer a cultural logic and an instrumental value beyond that of expressing mystical cosmic truths about the figure itself.

Even so, nothing of this is to suggest Blavatsky was not in earnest as an esoteric thinker, nor would I want to take a reductionist approach to her writings and say they were really about something else than esotericism.[105] However, opting for a religionist stance and viewing esotericism as a lofty, perennial category more or less disconnected from the world at large is no reasonable alternative either. Rather, I propose we view her texts as expressions of a religious cosmology and filled with political implications as well as strategic didactic manoeuvres, all of which were strongly coloured by contemporary radical discourse on the figure of Satan. The political implications, especially for the feminist cause, as well as the similarities with, for example, socialist Lucifers, may have been conscious or unconscious. With a shrewd and alert woman like Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, it would seem more likely she was well aware of quite a few of these dimensions.

'THE PLEASANT PATHS OF PROGRESS': FEMINISTS MAKING A HEROINE OF EVE

Blavatsky's ideas about the Fall can be fitted into a broader feminist context, both in the sense that she may herself have been inspired by certain writers of this kind who wrote about Genesis 3, and in terms of an influence she herself likely effected on some feminists concerning this issue. Unsurprisingly, many intellectual women, as early as the very beginning of the nineteenth century, found it difficult to accept the condemnation in Genesis of a desire for knowledge (here they often had in mind males in their own time attempting to keep women from gaining access to higher education), and they therefore tried to soften traditional denunciations of Eve's motivations when she took the fruit. Even highly pious women with some feminist inclinations

apparently felt a need to somewhat modify the traditional stance on the gaining of knowledge. One example is Hannah Mather Crocker (1752–1847), granddaughter of the famous puritan Cotton Mather, who in her 1818 book *Observations on the Real Rights of Women, with Their Appropriate Duties, Agreeable to Scripture, Reason and Common Sense* wrote about Eve: 'It appears her desire was to obtain knowledge, which might be laudable, though her reason was indeed deceived.'[106] Knowledge as such had long been a highly contested thing in Christian culture. As Allison P. Coudert points out, 'Kant's *sapere aude* (dare to know) would have made no sense, had it not been preceded by centuries of admonitions about the dangers of knowledge and especially of curiosity.' Such rebukes, Coudert emphasizes, had historically been directed, in particular, to women.[107]

In 1864, the American feminist Eliza W. Farnham (1815–1864) published *Woman and Her Era*, where she argues that women are the superior sex in essentially all respects. The story of Eve and the serpent is, contrary to popular opinion, further proof of this, she claims. Farnham lays down that 'human life became a career, a struggle, through the initiatory act of Eve', shutting the door on the preceding 'life of plenty, easy and ignorance'.[108] Her critique of man's prelapsarian condition is scathing, and she pronounces it to have been one of slavery and bondage.[109] Eve's actions, she says, was a 'great service to humanity', and she should be lauded for being the individual 'who first dared the trial'.[110] Farnham goes on:

> [W]hether the serpent represents Wisdom or Wickedness in this transaction, the compliment to the feminine nature is equally distinct, because of the purity and Godlikeness of the motive presented to it. Woman rose out of bondage, in the love of freedom—that she might become wiser and diviner. Man followed her. So early dates the spiritual ministration of the feminine.[111]

Although Farnham in this quote refrains from judging the moral nature of the serpent, the portrayal of the so-called tempter here is, in logical accordance with this reading, soon also subject to a fairly decisive shift. A few pages on, Farnham speaks of 'Wisdom, represented by the serpent', and a little later she explains about the injunction against eating the forbidden fruit that humanity 'should be much more inclined to attribute the prohibition to an enemy, and the encouragement to disregard it, to a wise, loving friend, than the contrary'.[112] This is still far from, for example, the outright Satanist reading of Genesis 3 proposed by Bakunin a few years later, or for that matter Blavatsky's counter-myth, but it is surely extremely radical in its

positive view of Eve as well as of a certain slithering creature with forked tongue. The assessment of Eve as an agent of progress can be seen very much as a product of its time, in several ways. Darwin had published his *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859, but this was only one part of a much broader —and at this time highly controversial—evolutionistic tendency in the sciences as well as, for instance, anthropology.[113] Farnham seems to be influenced by this, as evidenced by her insistence that Eve 'set the feet of her race in the pleasant paths of progress', and that without the knowledge she gained there would have been 'stagnation'.[114] She also emphasizes that 'History is re-written in the light of Modern Science', and it seems plausible that she herself was rewriting the biblical narrative in the light of evolutionism, as seen through a feminist lens.[115] She here anticipates Blavatsky both concerning the positive understanding of the serpent, and the emphasis on evolution in her counter-reading of the myth (even if Blavatsky, of course, was an anti-Darwinian esoteric evolutionist). Blavatsky might have known Farnham's book, directly or indirectly, or the ideas in it may also have been disseminated in other publications of which I am unaware. There is a distinct possibility that this type of counter-discourse on Genesis 3 was more widespread even before Blavatsky than I have been able to document.

The revaluation of Eve became still more pronounced towards the end of the century. We will see many examples of this throughout the present study, but one example that can be mentioned here is Henriette Greenebaum Frank's (1854–1922) 1894 paper, first presented at the Jewish Women's Congress and later also published. In it, she makes a drastically revisionist feminist reversal of the received meaning of Genesis 3:

> The woman of our day, like Eve, the All-Mother, stretches out her hand for the fruit of the tree of knowledge that she may know good from evil; though she lose the paradise of ignorance, she may gain the field of honest endeavor. The serpent appears to her not as Satan, the tempter, but rather as the companion of Minerva, the symbol of wisdom and eternity. If Adam had eaten more freely of the fruit tendered him by Eve, his descendants might have become too wise to deny women capabilities equal to men's.[116]

In light of such counter-readings, even though this one refutes the demonic connotations of the serpent, the explicitly Satanic feminism this study focuses on appears less bizarre than a first glance might imply. In fact, most examples of it fit in perfectly well with broader feminist and anticlerical tendencies of

the time. In chapter 3, we saw that similar inverted readings of scripture—and symbolic praise of Satan as an emancipator—were also commonplace in socialism, which further helps to contextualize the notion of Lucifer as the liberator of woman.

THE WOMAN'S BIBLE, A THEOSOPHICAL PROJECT?

The first major systematic attempt at feminist Bible criticism was *The Woman's Bible* (2 vols., 1895, 1898), by American suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) and her revising committee.[117] *The Woman's Bible* is a commentary on a selection of sections from the Bible that treat women. Most of it was written by Stanton, and signed with her initials, but other women also contributed, and often contradicted her statements. This, then, was not a new normative theology, but was meant to show that there are many ways to read scripture.[118] The book can be seen very much as a direct extension of Blavatsky's incendiary exhortation in *Isis Unveiled*: 'We must … consider the authenticity of the *Bible* itself. We must study its pages, and see if they, indeed, contain the commands of the Deity, or but a compendium of ancient traditions and hoary myths.'[119] Stanton, who had a deep interest in Theosophy, was a crucial figure in the American women's suffrage movement and belonged to the phalanx of it that identified the conservatism of Christian churches as a prominent obstacle for their struggle.[120] In the introduction to *The Woman's Bible*, Stanton—much like the editorial in *Lucifer* quoted earlier—proclaims church and clergy 'the very powers that make her [woman's] emancipation impossible' and explains to her female readers that 'your political and social degradation are but an outgrowth of your status in the Bible'.[121]

Stanton's project, like the efforts of predecessors such as Farnham and Frank, must be considered in light of its wider setting. Important factors here were the publication of the Revised Version of the Bible in 1881 and 1885 (the New and Old Testaments, respectively) and debates concerning so-called German criticism, which related Bible texts to other ancient Near Eastern sources. The traditional view had been that the Bible was inspired, infallible, and historically accurate, the words in it coming from God himself. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, few lay people were aware that such a thing as biblical criticism existed, but by the end of the

century most had some familiarity with it, even if they strongly disagreed with parts or all of its suggestions. In particular, Genesis was hotly debated, and scholars tried to number, date, and order the proposed sources behind it. These discussions were disseminated out into wider society in a variety of ways and set even non-specialists pondering such questions. Other circumstances that contributed to facilitating less reverential approaches to the Bible were Darwin's theory of evolution—which called into question the seven-day account of creation—and developments in astronomy, archaeology, and geology. All these things shook belief in the creation story presented in the Bible as literally true. Hereby, the authority of the Bible in general was beginning to slowly crumble, especially among the educated classes.[122]

The aforementioned developments also informed the drastic and occasionally hostile exegesis of scripture in some new religious movements, like Theosophy. One of the women involved in the pivotal early stages of Stanton's enterprise, the Englishwoman Frances Lord (1848–1923), was a dedicated Theosophist.[123] So were Matilda Joslyn Gage (whom we will encounter again in chapter 5) and Frances Ellen Burr, who both served on the final revising committee and contributed comments in the book.[124] Stanton herself, in her 1898 autobiography, describes reading Blavatsky with great enthusiasm, and talks of the 'occult studies' she initiated together with her daughter and Frances Lord.[125] It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the writings of Madame Blavatsky might in some way have had an impact on the conception and execution of *The Woman's Bible*. This is a side of the story that has been neglected in earlier scholarship.[126] Occultism in a wider sense (but probably filtered through Theosophical understandings) clearly influenced the way at least some of those writing in *The Woman's Bible* viewed scripture, as evidenced in the assertions by Frances Ellen Burr that the Bible 'is an occult book' and needs to be read 'in the light of occult teachings'.[127] There are other indications of the importance of these types of ideas for the committee, for instance, when Gage refers to Éliphas Lévi's laudable occult understanding of the Bible.[128] Lévi, incidentally (or not so incidentally), was, as we have seen, a major source of inspiration for Blavatsky's counter-reading of Genesis 3. While not all contributors to *The Woman's Bible* were Theosophists, several of the key figures—among them

the voice that dominates the text completely, Stanton—were avid readers of such literature.

'EXONERATE THE SNAKE, EMANCIPATE THE WOMAN': COUNTER-READING AS A LIBERATORY TACTIC

Already in the introduction to the first volume of *The Woman's Bible*, Stanton brings up the teaching that Eve caused the Fall of Man, and how this has been used to subjugate women ever since.[129] She returns to the topic several times, and in the second volume Stanton proposes that due to Darwin's discoveries we must concede that 'the race has been a gradual growth from the lower to a higher form of life, and that the story of the fall is a myth'. Hereby, 'we can exonerate the snake, emancipate the woman, and reconstruct a more rational religion for the nineteenth century'.[130] In the detailed commentary on Genesis 3, she rejects the general idea of a Fall and states her view that 'the Darwinian theory of the gradual growth of the race from a lower to a higher type of animal life, is more hopeful and encouraging'.[131] Once more, as in the case of Farnham, we can see the influence of evolutionism on arguments for dismantling the doctrine of the terrible Fall. Nevertheless, Fall or no Fall, Stanton proceeds to praise Eve, in a manner resembling Farnham, proclaiming she is 'pleased with her attitude, whether as a myth in an allegory, or as the heroine of an historical occurrence' and that 'the unprejudiced reader must be impressed with the courage, the dignity, and the lofty ambition of the woman'. Satan, she says, 'evidently had a profound knowledge of human nature, and saw at a glance the high character of the person he met', since he tempted her with 'knowledge, the wisdom of the Gods'.[132] She next likens Satan to Socrates or Plato, since 'his powers of conversation and asking puzzling questions, were no doubt marvelous, and he roused in the woman that intense thirst for knowledge'.[133] Again, then, the Devil (and here no attempt is made to distance the serpent from the figure of Satan) is given a most generous portrayal in early feminist exegesis.[134] The recurring up-valuation of knowledge as an unassailable good reflects, I would argue, the hunger for full access to the intellectual realm that was typical of most feminists. This hunger at times seemingly almost forces such writers to read Genesis 3 very differently from the hegemonic understanding of it as a warning against hubris and inappropriate curiosity. South African

freethinker Olive Schreiner, for example, used references to Genesis to find a language of defiance in relation to patriarchal rules, when she proclaimed about her sex in *Woman and Labour* (1911) that 'there is no fruit in the garden of knowledge it is not our determination to eat'.[135]

Another contributor to *The Woman's Bible*, Lillie Devereux Blake (1833–1913), also focuses on woman's thirst for knowledge as something laudable, writing glowingly of how Eve is 'fearless of death if she can gain wisdom', and should be seen as 'the first representative of the more valuable and important half of the human race'.[136] Commenting on the curse laid on Adam and Eve by God for their transgression, she foresees that through evolution, 'with the introduction of improved machinery, and the uplifting of the race there will come a time when there shall be no severities of labor, and when women shall be freed from all oppressions'.[137] In other words, she claims the triumphs of the human spirit (which can indirectly be said to be a product of Eve's acquisition of wisdom and enlightenment) will nullify God's supposed punishment of Eve and her daughters—a bold suggestion indeed, which likely offended many pious readers considerably. Stanton attacks the alleged curse as well, and objects to the fact that some women have refused anaesthetics when giving birth, and that some doctors have withheld them, both categories refraining from easing labour pains 'lest they should interfere with the wise provisions of Providence in making maternity a curse'.[138] Further on in *The Woman's Bible*, Lucinda B. Chandler analyses 1 Tim. 2, and again the focus is on the repulsiveness of forbidding women to strive for learning and wisdom. Chandler states that the notion that 'woman should have been condemned and punished for trying to get knowledge, and forbidden to impart what she has learned, is the most unaccountable peculiarity of masculine wisdom'.[139] In Chandler's opinion, Eve partaking of the fruit enabled her to lead 'the race out of the ignorance of innocence and into the truth'.[140] Engaging Paul's condemnation of Eve, she says the apostle 'evidently was not learned in Egyptian lore', wherefore he was unable to 'recognize the esoteric meaning of the parable of the fall'.[141] This supposed esoteric meaning was likely understood in Theosophically inspired terms by several, possibly most, of the contributors.

In a letter to the editor of *The Critic*, after the publication of the book, Stanton explained a dramatic implication of her deconstruction of Genesis 3: 'Take the snake, the fruit tree and the woman from the tableau, and we have

no fall, nor frowning judge, no Inferno, no everlasting punishment—hence no need of a Savior.'[142] Yet, what she has actually done is not to remove snake, fruit tree, and woman. Her tactic in this instance was not to declare the story a complete invention, or pointless nonsense, but to provide a counter-myth where Eve is a heroine and Satan a charitable philosophical instructor of woman. As quoted earlier, she did not ultimately pronounce a judgement on whether Eve was to be approached 'as a myth in an allegory, or as the heroine of an historical occurrence' (though she clearly leaned towards the former). By choosing this counter-discursive strategy, instead of simply saying the Bible should be disregarded and placed on the scrap heap of useless historical texts, she confirms the Bible's position as a significant fount of wisdom—if only read correctly. This is very much the same attitude assumed by Blavatsky in her esoteric inversions and subversions of Genesis 3.

Of course, many other influences are also conceivable. For example, one of Stanton's favourite poets, Walt Whitman, had incorporated a sprinkling of Romantic Satanism in one of his most well-known pieces (see chapter 10).[143] Moreover, in her autobiography, Stanton likens herself to Shelley when he was scattering one of his suppressed pamphlets.[144] Later, she describes Shelley as 'a sensitive, refined nature, full of noble purposes'.[145] One should perhaps not make too much of it, but it is a possibility that Stanton's counter-myths with didactic purposes were to some degree inspired by Shelley's similar endeavours in texts like *The Revolt of Islam*. She was also aware of Eliza Farnham and would certainly have read *Woman and Her Era* with its characterization of the serpent as 'a wise, loving friend'.[146]

'PLEASE DO NOT SPEAK ON THE BIBLE QUESTION': THE WAGES OF CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS

On the appearance of the first volume, *The Woman's Bible* immediately became controversial, and, as such books are wont to do, sold well, going through seven printings in six months and being translated into several languages.[147] Many tried to hinder the book from being circulated, by lobbying libraries to ban it and so on, but, as Stanton wrote in a letter to her son Theodore, 'the bigots promote the sale'.[148] In Freethought circles, it was wholeheartedly embraced, and Stanton was, for example, praised as 'the

female Voltaire'.[149] To her abysmal disappointment, after a heated internal debate it was disowned by the major US suffrage organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), of which she was the honorary president. Many of the younger, more conservative members felt attacks on Christianity were not only offensive but, more important, hurt the cause.[150] The rise of a conservative leadership within NAWSA, and the repudiation of Stanton, was part of the process that led to a 'mainstreaming' of the suffrage movement. In the end, the conflict over *The Woman's Bible* established more firmly the pragmatic alliance between religiously conservative and religiously liberal feminists, and pushed issues of the kind that Stanton and Frances Lord had hoped to raise—that is, Christianity's role in the subjection of woman—to the bottom of the agenda.[151]

Unsurprisingly, conservative clergy denounced *The Woman's Bible* as the work of Satan (and females in league with him). Since all the women behind the book were well-known suffragettes, the project played into the hands of anti-suffragists in the short term, just like its critics within NAWSA had predicted.[152] Nevertheless, Stanton's instinct to identify the Bible as something feminists had to deal with critically in one way or another was no doubt correct. In nineteenth-century political debates, the story of Eve, and the tradition of interpretation surrounding it, was still explicitly evoked by anti-feminists for support. For example, we have seen how a member of the House of Commons in England quoted Genesis 3 to support an ultra-traditional view in a debate over women's rights, which garnered an enthusiastic response from his colleagues. The politician's biblical legitimation of the subordination of women was then countered by a feminist esotericist using a Theosophical "Satanist" interpretation of Genesis 3 to undercut the authority of the patriarchal Christian polemic strategy. The politician's choice of domination technique was far from uncommon. At the time, Genesis 3 was used by a great many writers and orators all over the Western world to argue that the oppression of women was "natural" and God-given. Stanton's home country was certainly no exception and had a long tradition in this regard. For instance, this line of reasoning could be found among American Presbyterians.[153] Although the Puritans, who dominated the religious life of New England from the mid-seventeenth century until at least the mid-eighteenth century, had rejected notions of women as inherently sinful, they still thought of Eve's lapse as being very

much about a failure to subordinate herself to male authority. Accordingly, in the Puritans' view, Eve's daughters had inherited her vulnerability to temptations involving a defiance of the patriarchal order, an order that was certainly seen as essential to maintain.[154] The counter-myths presented in *The Woman's Bible* should be seen in light of such long-standing notions in American culture.

In the nineteenth century, some pious American medical doctors, as just mentioned, angered Elizabeth Cady Stanton by arguing that their colleagues should refuse to administer anaesthetics to women during childbirth, since they believed the intense pain the women experienced was a divinely ordained punishment for Eve's misdeed.[155] It is doubtful if the doctors would have objected similarly to advances in farming technology that made males able to till the earth without the pain and toil proscribed by God in his curse over Adam. Genesis 3, then, was also used in professional debates surrounding women's right to have control over their own bodies and medical treatments, something that attests to its central importance in discourse on gender during the period. As could hence be expected, this Bible passage was a hot topic among feminists in most Western countries. At least nominally (not all actually contributed or did any work), the committee for *The Woman's Bible* included members from Finland, England, Scotland, Austria, and France, making it an international project. Across Europe, we can find many examples of how Genesis 3 was repeatedly treated critically by feminists, for instance, in the wildly popular *Penthesileia: Ein Frauenbrevier für männerfeindliche Stunden* ('Penthesileia: A Women's Breviary for Man-hating Moments', 1907), by German feminist Leonie Meyerhof (1858–1933) (figure 4.3).[156] Stanton's undertaking was hence not unique as such.

FIGURE 4.3 Illustration by Anna Costenoble (1863–1930) of Eve and the serpent, from *Penthesileia: Ein Frauenbrevier für männerfeindliche Stunden* (1907), a volume of satirically anti-masculinist revisionary interpretation of myth by German feminist Leonie Meyerhof (1858–1933).

This being said, it is still necessary to acknowledge that Stanton was uncommonly radical and blunt in her antagonism towards Christianity, both in an international and an American feminist context. This often caused conflicts with other feminists, who were frequently highly religious even when critical of the most overtly patriarchal traits of Christianity.[157] For example, Stanton describes how she at an 1885 suffrage convention in Washington 'presented a series of resolutions, impeaching Christian theology—as well as all other

forms of religion, for their degrading teaching in regard to woman—which the majority of the committee thought too strong and pointed'.[158] This was not the first time something of this sort took place, and in cooperation with Matilda Joslyn Gage she had in fact been presenting similar resolutions, to no avail, on a yearly basis since 1878.[159] When addressing suffrage meetings during her travels in England, she always received admonitions prior to them along the lines of 'Now, Mrs Stanton, please do not speak on the Bible question'.[160] In England, however, she got the chance to give a lecture whose title asked the rhetorical question 'Has the Christian Religion Done Ought for Woman?'.[161] This does not mean she was an enemy of religion per se, and the lecture was actually delivered in the chapel of her friend Moncure Daniel Conway (whose drastic feminist reading of the Lilith myth was discussed in chapter 2) who was a Unitarian preacher. Eventually, Conway was also the one who buried her.[162] It seems Stanton, towards the end of her life, was predominantly an agnostic, but held certain ideas about an androgynous Creator. Accordingly, she addressed her mealtime grace to 'Mother and Father God'.[163]

Her idea for *The Woman's Bible* had been to include comments representing the whole spectrum of feminist attitudes to the Bible, from reverential to dismissive. Those who ended up contributing tended towards the latter position, but several also obviously held the Bible to be something more than a mere collection of patriarchal fairy tales. Stanton herself, although she was not an atheist, belonged firmly in the camp of the antagonists to all forms of mainstream Christianity. Frances Lord, the Theosophist who was her partner in getting the project off the ground, was even more radical and did not share her interest in representing all sorts of opinions on the Bible. Instead, she had solicited for collaborators in the Freethought journal *Index*, asking those keen on an endeavour 'for the benefit of women anxious to face their Bible foe' to get in touch.[164]

Lord, then, identified Christianity as an outright adversary that should be confronted. Others, more involved in the final book, could be quite far removed from her aggressively anti-Christian attitude. Lillie Devereux Blake, for example, came from a Congregationalist background and later became a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church.[165] I have been unable to ascertain what her religious beliefs were at the time she composed her contribution to *The Woman's Bible*, but she was not a hard-line enemy of

scripture as such. In any case, it would seem unlikely that Blake or Stanton held a metaphysical sympathy for the Devil similar to Blavatsky's. Even if the Theosophical guru denied Satan's existence in any absolute sense, due to her monism (and certainly did not conceive of him as an existing spiritual entity one should commune with or anything of that sort), she devoted quite a few pages to avidly singing his praise. In comparison to *The Secret Doctrine*, the comments on Genesis 3 in *The Woman's Bible* are less focused on the figure of the Devil, and more on Eve. However, Satan is quite explicitly rehabilitated in Stanton's portrayal, and by implication in Blake's and Lucinda B. Chandler's eulogizing of Eve's actions. Chandler, we should note, argues for an esoteric understanding of the Fall, which points in the direction of a Blavatskian interpretation of this event. From a reader-response perspective, Blavatsky's popularity among Anglophone feminists would also have made those familiar with her pro-Satanic statements read the exegesis in Stanton's book in light of this. Ultimately, whatever the extent of Blavatsky's influence on its conception, it is at least evident that *The Woman's Bible* contributed to the discourse of Satanic feminism and gave wide dissemination to ideas about Satan as a figure bestowing liberatory knowledge unto Eve, his chosen one.

CONCLUDING WORDS

This chapter has demonstrated that Satanic discourse played a fairly important part in Blavatsky's Theosophy, but was not central enough for her teaching as a whole to be labelled Satanism *sensu stricto*. In lauding Lucifer in the explicit manner she did, Blavatsky was a pioneer among esotericists. Earlier examples of Satanism are as good as exclusively to be found in purely literary contexts, or in political polemics (or in texts straddling the fence between these two categories).[166] Both of these types of writings are possible influences on Blavatsky, and she may have been aware of socialist Satanism, for example through her collaborators with left-wing leanings. To some extent, Theosophy can be placed on a continuum with progressive and subversive currents like socialism and feminism, and there was definitely an overlap concerning the individuals drawn to these ideologies. Blavatsky's choice to focus specifically on Genesis 3 when she created her counter-myth to the Christian tale of the Devil may have had something to do with the influx of feminists into Theosophy, and with her own position as a female

religious leader. Feminists would have been (and were, as seen in the case of Susan E. Gay) pleased with an implicit repudiation of the doctrine of woman as a reproachable sinner. Rejecting the traditional misogynist reading of Genesis 3 further undermined religious arguments against women as spiritual teachers. Blavatsky was probably able to appreciate this dimension—with its implications for more worldly, political matters—right alongside her goals of expressing what she felt were esoteric cosmic truths. There is also a tactical dimension to her Satanism, where the Theosophical counter-reading of scripture serves to destabilize hegemonic Bible interpretations, as well as views of scripture as the infallible word of God. This was thus part of her attempt to dethrone Christianity once and for all. Lastly, we must not forget her well-attested ribald sense of humour. Blavatsky enjoyed provoking people—a trait present in nearly every person that has ever employed some form of Satanic discourse.

Lucifer as a symbol of liberation was an established trope in Romanticism and socialism, which Blavatsky simply transferred to the esoteric realm. Similar revisions, explicit or implicit, where the serpent in the Garden of Eden is seen as benevolent can also be found in several (more or less) feminist texts predating *The Secret Doctrine* by decades. This might somehow have contributed to her counter-reading, or at least helped give it a cultural logic of sorts, since disputatious female interpreters of Genesis 3 had understood the tale thus for quite a while. The full feminist implications of this type of counter-reading are explored extensively in *The Woman's Bible*, a project on which several female Theosophists were among the collaborators. Since they never deny the serpent is to be identified with Satan, but still celebrate this slithering creature, there is a strongly implicit Satanism at hand in this feminist text. It seems plausible the book is coloured to some degree by Blavatsky's counter-myth of the supposed Fall as an attainment of gnosis, and Satan as a liberator. To these feminists, the Bible's condemnation of knowledge was tied up with men's barring of women from higher education. The supposed curse on Eve was approached in relation to how doctors—using Genesis 3 as support—refused women alleviation of their pain when giving birth, and so on. In short, the myth of the Fall was identified as a powerful anti-feminist legitimating device, which needed to be dealt with. Just like Blavatsky, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and some of the other women involved, saw institutionalized Christianity in general as an obstacle to progress (spiritual and feminist, respectively). Consequently, it

had to be blown to bits. Making a friend of the serpent and, in the case of Stanton et al., a heroine of Eve, was to a great extent, I would argue, a manoeuvre to help facilitate this act of demolition by creating a subversive counter-myth. This disruptive discourse targeted Genesis 3 as a key passage. Blavatsky may or may not have had partly similar 'feminist' goals (e.g. in the area of women's roles as religious leaders) in mind when also doing so. Regardless, the feminist implications were clear to a Theosophist suffragette like Susan E. Gay, who used Blavatsky's Satanist protest exegesis to in turn protest male chauvinist political use of Genesis 3.

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[1] Salinger 1953/1968, p. 191.

[2] Even Ruben van Luijk's extremely thorough dissertation (2013, pp. 167–169) surprisingly devotes less than two pages to Blavatsky's view of the Devil.

[3] Kraft 2003, pp. 127–128. The astonishing number of biographies is provided by Kraft (p. 127), but it is not specified whether all these are full-length books, or if some are, for example, lengthy biographical articles.

[4] Blavatsky 1888a, p. 442.

[5] Quoted in Godwin 1994, p. 322.

[6] Campbell 1980, p. 76.

[7] Lejon 1997, p. 43; Szalczer 1997, pp. 48–56; Sellon & Weber 1992, pp. 326–327.

[8] Prothero 1993, p. 198.

[9] Quoted in ibid., p. 203.

[10] Quoted in ibid., p. 206. My italics. On the social theories among Spiritualists that Olcott refers to, see Morita 1999.

[11] Prothero 1993, p. 208.

[12] The fact that Kropotkin and Bakunin, when they turned to socialism, became anarchists rather than communists may indeed have had something to do with their noble background.

[13] For examples of such right-wing tendencies, see Hutton 1999, pp. 360–361; on Blavatsky's connections to traditional esoteric groups, see Godwin 1994.

[14] Santucci 2006, p. 182.

[15] Godwin 1994, pp. 283–285; Johnson 1994, pp. 80–89.

[16] Johnson 1994, p. 81.

[17] Quoted in Godwin 1994, p. 292.

[18] Dixon 2001, p. 123. Dixon notes that there was nothing inevitable about immanentist theology leading to socialist inferences; rather, active work with the material was needed to turn it to such ends (p. 124).

[19] Kraft 1999, p. 64.

[20] Dixon 2001, pp. 133–137, 154. Regarding Besant and feminism, it should be noted that many (e.g. Johnson 1995, pp. 196–197) have commented on Besant's tendency to hero-worship various male figures, as well as her sustained focus on male external authority.

[21] Dixon 2001, p. 150.

[22] Kraft 2003, pp. 125–126.

[23] Bednarowski 1980, p. 221.

[24] Prothero 1993, pp. 197–198.

[25] On Theosophical racism, see Kraft 2013, p. 365.

[26] Dixon 2001, pp. 64, 68, 174.

[27] Blavatsky 1890, p. 472.

[28] Quoted in Kraft 1999, p. 104.

[29] Sellon & Weber 1992, p. 312; Kraft 2003, p. 132. The battle of Mentana took place in 1867 and was a clash between Garibaldi's troops, that were marching on Rome, and a papal defence force.

[30] Quoted in Kraft 2003, p. 134.

[31] Quoted in Bednarowski 1980, p. 223.

[32] Kraft 1999, pp. 32, 147.

[33] Ibid., p. 145; Kraft 2003, p. 126.

[34] Campbell 1980, pp. 32–35, 40–41.

[35] Sellon & Weber 1992, p. 320.

[36] Blavatsky [1877]/1988, vol. 2, pp. 473–528.

[37] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 480, 500.

[38] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 472.

[39] Hammer 1999, pp. 226–227.

[40] Blavatsky 1888a, vol. 2, p. 162. For examples of this interchangeability, see e.g. Blavatsky 1888a, vol. 2, pp. 510–513. In accordance with Blavatsky's usage, and out of a stylistic concern for variety, I also use these different names interchangeably.

[41] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 244.

[42] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 243.

[43] E.g. ibid., vol. 2, pp. 389, 478, 513.

[44] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 198.

[45] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 506–507.

[46] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 507.

[47] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 507.

[48] Lévi 1860, p. 16: 'le faux Lucifer de la légende hétérodoxe'.

[49] This, at least, is the view of Lévi's political development that has been common among scholars (e.g. McIntosh 1972/1975), but it appears Julian Strube's recent (2016) book may occasion a change of

opinion concerning this matter.

[50] Cf. Lévi 1860, pp. 195–197; Faxneld 2006a, pp. 101–107. It should be noted that Lévi also identified the astral light with, among other things, the Holy Spirit.

[51] E.g. Eliade 1976, p. 49; Campbell 1980, p. 25.

[52] Campbell 1980, pp. 33–34, 37. As Olav Hammer has suggested to me, Cambridge-educated schoolmaster G. R. S. Mead (1863–1933), who became Blavatsky's private secretary in 1889 and later translated Gnostic texts, is also likely to have played a part here. The matter of Gnostic influences on Blavatsky should be investigated further, as should the broader reception of Gnostic material (and of Christian polemics against Gnostics) in nineteenth-century alternative religious groups.

[53] Blavatsky 1888a, vol. 2, p. 243. It must be stressed that the sources traced in this chapter most likely only represent a fraction of those utilized by Blavatsky, since she is notorious for her innumerable borrowings and plagiarisms from a vast plethora of different types of texts.

[54] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 386.

[55] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 377.

[56] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 510.

[57] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 515.

[58] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 73.

[59] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 389.

[60] Sellon & Weber 1992, p. 322.

[61] Blavatsky 1888a, vol. 2, p. 209.

[62] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 513.

[63] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 515.

[64] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 513.

[65] Prothero 1993, p. 210; Campbell 1980, pp. 97–100.

[66] Editor 1887, p. 6.

[67] Ibid., p. 2.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Headley 1888a; Editor 1888a.

[70] May 1888, p. 68.

[71] Ibid., p. 69.

[72] Headley 1888b, p. 171.

[73] Editor 1888b, p. 171.

[74] Headley 1888c.

[75] Blavatsky 1888b, p. 344. The reason for signing it with her name could also be simply that she became the sole editor of the journal from November 1888 (later, October 1889–June 1891, co-editing it with Besant and at first having shared the duty with Mabel Collins). Kraft 1999, p. 36.

[76] Blavatsky 1888b, p. 345.

[77] The publication date of the book as being mid-October 1888 is given in Santucci 2006, pp. 182–183.

[78] Cf. also William Blake's *Satan in his Original Glory* (pen, ink, and watercolour, circa 1805).

[79] See the index of Blavatsky's works by Boris de Zirkoff (1991, pp. 94, 503).

[80] Blavatsky 1882.

[81] Bednarowski 1980, p. 207.

[82] Critiquing Bednarowski, Joy Dixon writes: '[W]hile the features Bednarowski identified were characteristic of theosophy in its first fifty years, many of them were least evident at precisely those moments when women dominated the society.' Dixon 2001, p. 68.

[83] Bednarowski 1980, p. 208.

[84] Somewhat contradictory to Bednarowski's hypothesis, Blavatsky did believe in a Fall of Man, occurring when mankind started procreating physically, but this was not related to the events in the Garden of Eden, which she saw as positive. On this other fall in Blavatsky's writings, see Kraft 1999, pp. 85–86.

[85] Gay 1890, p. 118. On Gay's feminist activism, see Dixon 2001, pp. 157–159.

[86] Gay 1890, p. 120.

[87] Kraft 2003, p. 126.

[88] Editor 1890, p. 442.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Dixon 2001, p. 154. It is worth keeping in mind the distinct cultural traditions behind the terms *hermaphroditism* and *androgynity*, and Theosophists occasionally considered them separate phenomena. Kraft 1999, p. 141.

[91] See chapter 2.

[92] Two in *The Secret Doctrine* (vol. 1, p. 253; vol. 2, p. 389), one in *Isis Unveiled* (vol. 2, p. 302) and two elsewhere. Zirkoff 1991, p. 51.

[93] Kraft 2003, p. 134. Blavatsky's claim to never have had sex was part of a broader rejection within Theosophy of sexuality, which was deemed a destructive force in terms of spiritual development, physical health and women's liberation. In some sense, this attitude belonged to the Victorian mainstream. Theosophical women rejecting physical motherhood and focusing instead on metaphorical varieties thereof was extremely unconventional. Kraft 2013, pp. 360–363.

[94] Prothero 1993, p. 215; Kraft 1999, p. 158.

[95] Dixon 2001, p. 23.

[96] Kraft 2003, p. 126.

[97] Massey 1887, p. 81.

[98] Ibid., p. 82.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Zirkoff 1991, pp. 145–146, 311, 484, 86–92, 109–110, 260–262. The reason the indexes of *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled* have not also been consulted here is that the role Satan plays in these works has already been treated in detail.

[101] Cf. Faxneld 2006a, pp. xiii–xvi, 108–117. For the distinction between Satanism *sensu lato* and *sensu stricto*, see chapter 1.

[102] On Kadosh, see Faxneld 2011c; Faxneld 2013a. On Gregorius (whose system is not as explicitly Satanic as those of Kadosh, Siitoin, and Przybyszewski), see Faxneld 2006a, pp. 177–188. On Siitoin, see Granholm 2009. On Crowley's view of Satan, see Faxneld 2006a, pp. 150–160. On Przybyszewski's Satanism, perhaps the first well-developed system of such thought, see Faxneld 2012h and chapter 7 in the present study.

[103] Kraft 1999, p. 12.

[104] Naturally, we should also remember that there were quite a few Christian socialists, pacifists, etc.

[105] Cf. Kraft 1999, pp. 195–197, and Dixon 2001, p. 12, where they too argue against dichotomizing religious and "rational" or political commitments, and Johnson's more pronounced emphasis on the spiritual side of matters, Johnson 1994, p. 242.

[106] Quoted in Taylor & Weir 2006, p. 27.

[107] Coudert 2008, p. 231.

[108] Farnham 1864, p. 136. Farnham had caused controversy in the 1840s, when she was matron at the women's section at Sing Sing Prison. Among other things, she drastically cut down on the religious instruction of the inmates. Floyd 2006, p. 313.

[109] Farnham 1864, p. 137.

[110] Ibid., p. 139.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., pp. 141, 144.

[113] Darwin, we should note, was in a sense more interested in adaptation than in evolution in the sense the term was commonly understood in late nineteenth-century debates. Moreover, the evolutionary theories of Darwin and scholars like Herbert Spencer and Edward Burnett Tylor did not, it seems, exert the direct causal influence on one another in their formative stages that is sometimes assumed (even if, for instance, Darwin borrowed Spencer's term *the survival of the fittest* for the fifth edition of *The Origin of the Species*, using it as a synonym for his own *natural selection*). Both Spencer and Darwin seem to have independently derived their notion of a struggle for survival as a basic element of existence from Malthus. Their theories are thus better understood as products of certain broader tendencies of the time. A biologization of theories concerning sociocultural matters clearly took place, but there has been a tendency to overemphasize Darwin's significance in this context. Finally, we should keep in mind here that a doctrine of societal progress had been present at least since the Enlightenment, but also that the prominent nineteenth-century evolutionists were not as uncritically idealizing of evolution as they are commonly made out to be (Sanderson 1990/1992, pp. 28–33). In more popular contexts, however, the Darwinian and sociocultural theories were blended less cautiously, and evolution could be held up as a rather more rose-tinted concept.

[114] Farnham 1864, pp. 141, 142.

[115] Ibid., p. 149.

[116] Quoted in Taylor & Weir 2006, pp. 92–93. Admittedly, the Jewish context Frank spoke and published in is somewhat separate from the surrounding (predominantly) Christian culture of Europe and the United States of the time. But it would be wrong to imagine that Jewish feminists and those

from a Christian background did not interact and influence one another, even if the specific words quoted here were directed to other Jewish women.

[117] Twenty-three women agreed to have their names listed as members of the revising committee, but only seven actually contributed commentaries to the first volume. Kern 1991, p. 376.

[118] Loades 2011, p. 316.

[119] Blavatsky [1877]/1988, vol. 2, p. 67. Blavatsky writes Bible with italics, perhaps to make a point about it not having an especially holy status in comparison to other books.

[120] Loades 2011, p. 309.

[121] Stanton et al. 1898a, pp. 8, 10.

[122] Taylor & Weir 2006, pp. 10–12; Loades 2011, pp. 315–316.

[123] Loades 2011, p. 315. It was Lord who introduced Stanton to Theosophy. Kern 2001, pp. 60, 93.

[124] Kern 2001, p. 167.

[125] Stanton 1898, p. 377.

[126] Kern (2001, pp. 60, 93–94, 165–167) mentions briefly that Stanton, and other members of the committee, were interested in Theosophy, but no one seems aware of the similarity between their interpretations of, for example, Genesis 3 and that to be found in Blavatsky's writings, nor has anyone —as far as I know—acknowledged the resemblance when it comes to a harsh deconstructionist attitude towards the Bible. Most studies of Stanton (for example, Elizabeth Griffith's 1984 biography) do not even mention Blavatsky or Theosophy. Kathi Kern's insightful monograph on *The Woman's Bible* suggests the feminist celebrations of Eve were inspired by Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), the founder of Christian Science, who 'lauded Eve for her wisdom in being the first to confess her sin in eating the forbidden fruit, and argued that this act of confession entitled her and all women to future glories' (Kern 2001, pp. 88–89, quote on p. 89). However, as we will see, Stanton et al. held much more radical ideas and did not consider Eve a sinner at all, nor the fall an unfortunate event. Blavatsky would hence seem a much more likely source of inspiration, especially since it is documented that several of them read her books. In sharp contrast to her impressive grasp of other matters, Kern seems to have little knowledge of Theosophy, which shows not least in her giving the title of Blavatsky's first book as *Isis Revealed* instead of *Isis Unveiled* (Kern 2001, pp. 93–94). By 1890, it seems Stanton was less enthusiastic about Theosophy as a way to improve the world, but exactly wherein her objections lay is difficult to assess (p. 247). This does not affect the probability of her having been inspired by it in the work on the first volume of *The Woman's Bible*. As late as 1886 she was still talking about 'the beauty of occult literature' (p. 257).

[127] Stanton et al. 1898b, p. 106.

[128] Ibid., p. 177.

[129] Stanton et al. 1898a, p. 7.

[130] Stanton et al. 1898b, p. 214.

[131] Stanton et al. 1898a, p. 24.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., p. 25. As Kathi L. Kern points out, in Stanton's redemption of Eve, unlike other instances where she 'argued on a point of translation or historical criticism', she 'claimed no special authority beyond her unique powers as a woman to reveal the "unprejudiced" meaning of biblical texts' (Kern 1991, p. 375). These passages could hence be seen as an example of creative counter-mythmaking.

[134] Stanton refers to the serpent as 'the tempter', a traditional name for Satan, and in no way tries to claim this creature is not the Devil. Lillie Devereux Blake, who also comments on Genesis 3, does not offer any such denials either.

[135] Schreiner 1911, p. 167. Schreiner should nevertheless not be made out to be particularly Satanic in her choice of overall symbolism, as she in the same book, for example, uses Lucifer as a negative metaphor (p. 148).

[136] Stanton et al. 1898a, pp. 26, 27. For a biographical sketch of Lillie Devereux Blake, see Farrell 1997.

[137] Stanton et al. 1898a, p. 27.

[138] Ibid., p. 31. Blake, of course, concurrently argues that God's punishment of males will also be nullified by science.

[139] Stanton et al. 1898b, p. 163.

[140] Ibid., pp. 165–166.

[141] Ibid., p. 167.

[142] Quoted in Kern 2001, p. 177.

[143] Stanton's fondness for Whitman's poetry is mentioned in Gordon 1973, p. 7.

[144] Stanton 1898, p. 379.

[145] Ibid., p. 395.

[146] Ibid., p. 305.

[147] Griffith 1984, p. 212. On the sales of the book, see also Kern 2001, p. 262.

[148] Kern 2001, p. 217.

[149] Ibid., p. 209. Freethought was an older word for what in Great Britain had by this time become replaced by the more modern label "Secularism", a term that in the United States was used interchangeably with the older one. Ibid., p. 240.

[150] Kern 1991, pp. 371–372, 376–378; Kern 2001, pp. 181–189. The resolution repudiating *The Woman's Bible* was passed by a margin of 53 to 41 (Kern 1991, p. 378). The press also reported extensively on this intra-feminist controversy. Among other things, the *New York Times* quoted Rachel Foster Avery, corresponding secretary of the organization, saying that the ideas in the book were 'set forth in a spirit which is neither reverent nor inquiring' ('Discuss the Woman's Bible', *New York Times*, January 24, 1896).

[151] Kern 2001, p. 206.

[152] Loades 2011, p. 319. On the reception, see also Kern 2001, pp. 172–176. We can further note that Stanton's counter-reading of Eve's interaction with Satan was highlighted as a particularly problematic aspect of the book in an opinion piece by one Mrs. W. Winslow Crannell in the *New York Times* (3 March 1896). Crannell 1896.

[153] Selvidge 1996, p. 146.

[154] Kvam, Schearing, & Ziegler 1999, p. 309. Naturally, in the religious history of the United States, we can also find plenty of egalitarian alternatives to such male chauvinist interpretations of Christianity. One example is Shaker theology, where the domination of men over women, defined by Shakers as a disorderly social relationship, could be seen as in itself having comprised the Fall of Man (and was

thus not a result of it, or a punishment for it). But in all fairness it must still be said that hierarchical, androcentric, misogynist interpretations of the Bible have always clearly dominated. Ibid., p. 357.

155 Ibid., p. 319. On Eve and childbirth, see also Kern 2001, p. 80.

156 [Meyerhof] [1907]/1982, pp. 44–48. Meyerhof, whose book was issued anonymously, does not focus on knowledge as noble or the serpent as a helper in the same manner that we have seen in the other examples, but subverts the biblical narrative in other ways.

157 Kern 2001, p. 104.

158 Stanton 1898, p. 381.

159 Ibid., p. 382. It would seem she had held convictions of this type for a very long time, ever since the 1840s. They had, however, become even more radical over time (Smylie 1976, p. 306; Kern 1991, p. 373). On Stanton's troubled and often frankly antagonistic relationship to religion throughout her life, see Griffith 1984, pp. 20–22, 45–46, 186, 210–212; Kern 2001, pp. 40–48, 58, 64, 66–67, 90, 137. A straightforward explanation of her view of the Bible in her final years can be found in her autobiography: 'I felt the importance of convincing women that the Hebrew mythology had no special claim to a higher origin than that of the Greeks, being far less attractive in style and less refined in sentiment. Its objectionable features would long ago have been apparent had they not been glossed over with a faith in their divine inspiration.' Stanton 1898, p. 452.

160 Holton 1994, p. 1129.

161 Kern 1991, p. 373; Kern 2001, p. 53. This lecture was later published in the *North American Review*.

162 Smylie 1976, p. 309. In his autobiography, Conway describes this lecture as Stanton's 'first matured declaration of religious independence'. Conway 1904, vol. 2, p. 285.

163 Griffith 1984, p. 210. On Stanton's religiosity, see also Kern 2001, p. 12

164 Kern 2001, p. 100.

165 Smylie 1976, p. 310.

166 Additionally, there are some interesting instances in European folk religion where the Devil was conceptualized as a helpful, if not entirely benevolent, figure (see chapter 2).

[W]e must judge a weird tale not by the author's intent, or by the mere mechanics of the plot.

H. P. LOVECRAFT, 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' (1927)[1]

5

Satan as the Emancipator of Woman in Gothic Literature

INTRODUCTION

At the time when belief in actual witches and demons had largely died out in the educated classes, use of such motifs expanded in works of popular fiction. A main repository for the old motifs was the Gothic genre, where Satan and woman were frequently connected. In particular, this was expressed through recurrent references to the narrative of the Fall in Genesis 3.

The chapter, which roughly follows a chronological trajectory, begins with an overview of Gothic literature, and its concerns with metaphysical and demonic matters. Woman's collusion with the Devil in five major novels in the genre from the years 1772 to 1820 is then analysed. Three vampire tales written between 1836 and 1897 are scrutinized next. Finally, we will look at a werewolf novella from 1928, which takes the by now firmly established Gothic notion of Satan as the emancipator of woman—previously mostly depicted in an anti-feminist manner as a terrible thing, though at times with considerable ambivalence—and combines it with a quite explicitly feminist sensibility.

Aside from the last example, the texts discussed here belong firmly in the realm of mass-market, "lowbrow" culture (which is not to say they lack complexity). They thus show how the motifs that we are interested in were

disseminated across the whole spectrum of sophisticated and less cultured readers, from the heights of Shelley's intricate and refined *The Revolt of Islam* (treated in chapter 3) to the trashy depths of horror stories. It is notable that popular fiction tended to have a moralizing tone, even when an ambiguous sympathy for the women in league with the Devil is observable. As I will argue, Gothic texts were all the same party to the gradual shift in the view of such females, which made them more and more attractive as in some sense positive role models.

THE MONSTROUS, FEMALE, AND BARBARIC GOTHIC GENRE

For most people, the term *Gothic novel* probably evokes vague notions of narratives about ghosts, demons, and vampires, which take place in (preferably dilapidated) castles or cloisters. Those with more than a passing interest in literary history are probably additionally aware that the genre is usually held to have flowered primarily in Great Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. A few courses in English literature may further have yielded the knowledge that Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is commonly held to be the first Gothic novel. The idea of the Gothic as a "female" genre may also be familiar, with Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) as its poster girl. Camille Paglia describes it as 'a rare example of a woman [Radcliffe] creating an artistic style' and assures us that '[t]he vast audience of the Gothic novel was and is female'.[2] Less known than all this is probably that scholars have frequently seen the genre as thoroughly preoccupied with metaphysical and religious questions.

The word *Gothic* is derived from the name of certain Germanic tribes, and from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century the term was used pejoratively about architecture and literature that judges of taste deemed monstrous, barbaric, and confused. Eventually, some started to find such things oddly appealing.[3] Writing in 1762, Richard Hurd praised English authors, such as Edmund Spenser, as more poetical than their classical predecessors, since 'the *manners* they paint, and the *superstitions* they adopt, are the more poetical for being Gothic'.[4] In the second edition (1765) of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the subheading had been changed from *A Story* to *A Gothic Story*. Walpole had gathered a number of pre-existing themes and motifs, and now put a label on what he had assembled. This naming created a new literary genre, which flourished in the wake of

Otranto's enormous success.[5] Subsequent key works in the genre include Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance* (1794) and *The Italian; or, the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797), William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk: A Romance* (1796), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). In older scholarship, *Melmoth* is often designated the "last" Gothic novel: *The Gothic Novel, 1764–1820, R.I.P.* More recent studies tend to perceive the genre as very much alive even after this, and I adhere to this view.[6]

I further approach the genre as being international in scope, with, for example, French and German equivalents, although the British writers must be considered the primary starting point and source of inspiration for many of their colleagues on the continent. Although originally mostly a British phenomenon, the Gothic genre hence soon became crossbred with German and French literature. It was hugely popular in France, something that some have wanted to relate to the horrors of the 1789 revolution. In his oft-quoted essay 'Idée sur les romans' ('Ideas about the Novel', 1800), the Marquis de Sade proposed that the fashion for supernatural tales was a direct effect of revolutionary atrocities: 'For those who knew all the woes the wicked can heap upon men, the novel became both difficult to write and monotonous to read … it was thus necessary to appeal to Hell for help to compose titles of interest.'[7] The revolution, of course, had other effects than to create a craving for grotesque tales of the extra-mundane. One reason for the French enthusiasm for all things Gothic may have been the spiteful anti-Catholicism prevalent in many such texts, and this cultural import from across the channel parallels the rise of a new form of anticlerical literature in France that would have been impossible to publish openly under the *ancien régime*.[8] Gothic literature may simultaneously have served a rather different function, too—as replacement for religious longings that had become difficult to satiate using the traditional means. As Robert Le Tellier puts it: 'Gothic mystery thus emerged as a substitute for discredited religious mystery.'[9] Some have here wished to make analogies to Rudolf Otto's notion of *mysterium tremendum*, seeing this early form of terrifying literature as an example of this phenomenon.[10] This, however, may be to make a bit too much of the genre.

Robert D. Hume has emphasized the close connection between Romanticism and the Gothic. According to Hume, both are based on the

insight that neither reason nor religious faith are sufficient to deal with the complexities of life. For Romantics, it is worth striving towards a higher order where dichotomies and imbalances are dissolved. Some of them may even feel they have achieved this synthesis. The Gothic genre, by contrast, represents a gloomy exploration of man's limitations and the impossibility of reaching a higher order.[11] In this characterization, Hume focuses primarily on the Gothic novels written from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, as do I. This later phase, he claims, is distinguished by moral ambiguity, which can be related to a general tendency to moral relativism and problematization of received religious dichotomies among European freethinkers at this time. Typical literary expressions are Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and Byron's *Cain*.[12]

With the Romantics, this dissolution of old moral categories may, as in Blake's *Marriage*, lead to a unification of former antipodes. In the Gothic context, the conflicts remain unresolved and the disorder is more threatening than promising, more a question of contamination than a potential synthesis. Goodness is stained by evil, and evil shows traits of goodness in a disturbing and troublesome way.[13] This commonly leads to a 'tendency to despair and misery, and often to a perverse fascination with the powers of blackness'.[14] Although Hume does not say so, some central Romantic works (e.g. *Cain*) would in fact fit this description quite well, and I believe they could fruitfully be approached as examples of Gothic literature (Byron was an avid reader of this genre). It is notable that the revaluations of Satan among the Romantics came after many of the main Gothic depictions of sublime evil and fascinating demons, and they may have been an influence on Romantics like Shelley and Byron in this respect.

Based on the confusion of good and evil, Hume proposes that the Gothic novel is permeated by a 'non-Christian or anticlerical feeling'. Since religion does not satisfactorily answer the authors' queries about good and evil, religious institutions and the (according to the authors) oversimplified morality they propound become targets of criticism.[15] As we will see, it is mostly Catholicism that is attacked. This seems a bit odd if we accept Hume's analysis that the intention was to express disappointment with religious world views. England, where most of the novels were written, was of course thoroughly Anglican at the time. Why condemn a religion, Catholicism, that one had very limited contact with? Perhaps, I would like to

suggest, some Gothic authors used condemnations of Catholicism as a form of covert strike against Protestant Christianity, since such views would have been impossible to express openly due to the blasphemy laws of the time.

FALLEN WORLD, FALLING MANKIND: DEFINING THE GOTHIC

In the collection volume *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (1974), which was pivotal for this field of study, the contributing scholars constantly return to the notion of the Gothic as a way of struggling with the problems resulting from the disintegration of the stable medieval faith in God.[16] Six years later, Ann B. Tracy takes a similar approach in her massive inventory of over two hundred Gothic works. She underscores how the Gothic world is a fallen place, where man lives out his days in horror and alienation, without hope and haunted by 'images of his mythic expulsion, by its repercussions'. It is a world where mankind always succumbs to temptation, with horrible consequences, but where atonement and forgiveness for sins are seldom to be seen. The fallen condition instead becomes a downward spiral. The settings of the novels also tend to be 'fallen': decayed ruins that hint at the prior existence of a now lost paradise.[17]

Since the theme of the Fall, of course, ultimately goes back to Genesis 3, the scenes of temptation that are so common in Gothic novels tend to take place in gardens, alluding to Eden.[18] This is the case in, for example, *Melmoth* and *The Monk*. It is, I would like to underscore, the fact that the world is fallen—and man falling—*but without any possibility of redemption* that differentiates this main Gothic theme from the conventional Christian world view, which also emphasizes the fallen nature of our world. The divergence, then, lies in that even the most stern and pessimistic priest would still hold up the hopeful notion of absolution from sin through Christ.

Robert Le Tellier views the first Fall as so central that he proposes the basic relationship between characters in Gothic novels can be reduced to the hero, the heroine, and the villain, with these three simply being forms of Adam, Eve, and the serpent.[19] According to him, Eve is the central figure and appears in three varieties: (1) 'a pure and noble consort prior to the temptation', (2) 'a guileful temptress anxious to involve her companion in her own disastrous folly', and (3) 'a suffering woman in the world of travail

subsequent to the expulsion from the Garden'.[20] Of these, number (2) will be my primary focus here, but Le Tellier has overlooked a fourth variety that is of greater importance for the purposes of the present study. In, for example, *Zofloya* and *Melmoth*, the main female characters are no temptresses, and the main topic is instead how woman herself is tempted by Satan. In other words, the subject is Eve and the serpent, not what Eve later does to Adam.

Drawing on Hume and Tracy, we can summarize the overarching theme of Gothic literature as *fallen world, falling mankind, with no hope of redemption*. This is then expressed using a selection of typical motifs. The combination of this theme with the specific set of motifs provides a good working definition of the genre.[21] Let us look at some of the main motifs. A motif that is hardly unexpected is the *tempter*, who can either be a supernatural demon or a human figure with demonic traits. This character often overlaps with the complex *heroic villain*, who is at times himself the tempter, and at times the one being drawn successively deeper into depravity by such a figure.[22] The ability of a protagonist to be both hero and malefactor is, of course, connected with the disquieting blending of good and evil in the fallen world. The motif of *degenerated religion* also reflects this, represented by figures like the lascivious monk and the cruel abbess. Not even the purest pure and highest good, Christianity, is innocent in the Gothic world. Christianity too is fallen, contaminated, and mingled with wickedness. Paired with this motif, we often find that of *ruins*, which may be present both in the form of decaying buildings and in the fragmentation of the novel's text itself (the words on the page becoming a sort of ruin). Both can be read as an image of the fallen condition, where man's relation to God is in ruins.[23] Another motif that may be both physical and metaphorical is the *labyrinth*, in which man is lost with no higher order in sight.[24] Frightening *dreams, hallucinations*, or *visions* frequently play an important part in the narratives and are at times difficult to distinguish from reality (both for the characters and for the reader). Swedish Gothic specialist Mattias Fyhr sees this as part of the subjectivity he identifies as typical of the genre.[25] The inability to tell true from false, good from evil, dream from reality, is, in my opinion, primarily to be seen as part of the fallen condition. It can further be related to the famous 'The mind is its own place' speech by Milton's Satan. *The Supernatural*, finally, is a motif that gives the world a further ambiguity. It may be present either as something that actually exists, or as something the

characters mistakenly believe to be supernatural but later realize has a natural cause (the latter being typical of Ann Radcliffe's novels).[26] Since this category is represented in Gothic texts by demons, vampires, and ghosts—but hardly ever by God, angels, or the like—it indicates again that the world is fallen.

To summarize, the definition of the Gothic genre that I will use here, which is based on earlier scholarship and my own reading of ten of the most classic Gothic novels, is as follows: texts that express the theme of *fallen world, falling man, with no hope of redemption* using motifs like *the tempter*, the *heroic villain, degenerated religion, ruins, labyrinths, dreams, hallucinations, visions*, and *the supernatural*.[27] Naturally, certain flexibility should be allowed in regards to the motifs, as not all of them will be present in every work the label can be, and typically has been, attached to.

SATAN AND TRANSGRESSIVE DEMONIC FEMALES IN GOTHIC LITERATURE

A possible, and indeed quite often employed, tool to give form to the main theme as well as several of the motifs (in particular, the tempter, the heroic villain, degenerated religion, and the supernatural) is Satan. As portrayed in Gothic novels, he is frequently given traits borrowed from the Satan of *Paradise Lost*, the heroic villain par excellence. Helen Stoddard contends that—with a few exceptions, like Zofloya in Charlotte Dacre's eponymous 1806 novel and Gil-Martin in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824)—'Satanic figures do not appear as such in Gothic novels but rather certain Satanic characteristics are projected onto evil human characters.'[28] This, however, is simply not true. The Devil himself is present also in several of the most central and famous Gothic novels, like Lewis's *The Monk* and Beckford's *Vathek*. According to Tracy's inventory of two hundred Gothic novels, Satan or "lesser demons" can be found in twenty-two of them.[29] One-tenth of the selection may not sound like very much, but we should bear in mind that many of these twenty-two are key works.[30] The borrowing of elements from the Prince of Darkness is considerably more common. A famous example is how Frankenstein's monster in Mary Shelley's novel paraphrases the line 'Evil, be thou my good' from Milton's Lucifer.[31]

Hannes Vatter has stated that Satan in the Gothic novel, unlike his counterpart in Romantic literature, is not 'a philosophical or political symbol, but an instrument to evoke terror and strong feelings in the reader's mind'.[32] If one reads a larger selection of Gothic texts attentively (Vatter is a specialist in Romanticism, and seemingly not that well-read in Gothic literature), it will be clear that the situation is more complicated. As mentioned, one distinguishing Gothic feature is the disturbing dissolution of strict moral categories, the contamination of good by evil and vice versa. This chapter will demonstrate how the Gothic Satan is an example of supposed evil also having some potentially positive traits (depending on the reader's preferences, of course). He thus emerges to some extent as a symbol of joyful transgression, dangerous but non-hypocritical new perspectives, revolt against societal norms (some of which are unquestionably portrayed as pointless and cruelly restrictive in the texts) and empowerment for the powerless (women). All the same, he also maintains his role as cosmic villain and punisher of the wicked, whereby the revolutionary potential in the novels is typically annulled and dispelled in the ultimately rather conventional endings (where "sinners" are punished), which do not always ring entirely true to the preceding bulk of the text.

As mentioned, some scholars have been keen to emphasize the Gothic novel as a predominately female genre, created by a woman, Ann Radcliffe, and read mostly by women throughout the ages.[33] In 1976, Ellen Moers coined the term *female Gothic* in her influential book *Literary Women*. Among other things, Moers's study attempts to identify what differentiates women's work in the genre from that of their male counterparts.[34] The discussion about whether such a difference exists has raged ever since. Kari Winter, for example, claims that men's Gothic upholds the status quo and depicts brutal punishments for women who transgress against it, while the female variety explores the possibilities of resisting it.[35] She theorizes that Matthew Gregory Lewis, the famous Gothic author who was also a Member of Parliament, wrote his gruesome tales in his capacity as 'an agent of the state inscribing the dominant ideology'. Ann Radcliffe wrote 'in implicit recognition of her position as a disenfranchised alien who could sabotage the dominant ideology'.[36] Winter's examples from the novels of these authors are vague and unconvincing, and to me the major difference between them seems mostly to be that Lewis was fonder of detailed and disgusting descriptions of

blood and gore. My stance in this question is that there is no clear and consistent difference between male and female contributions to the genre. This also applies to the treatment of woman's relation to the Devil.

As we shall see, Gothic literature is frequently centred on an ambivalent discourse concerning transgression, where the transgressive is often portrayed in a fashion that is not strictly condemning. This makes the ostensible moral lessons somewhat unclear. Further, the mostly female readership (if we accept Paglia's claims) surely did not consist only of conservative individuals fully satisfied with traditional roles for women. More rebellious readers might have identified or sympathized to some extent with the demonic females in the novels, since these are typically the only women in the narratives who have any agency and power to speak of. I will attempt readings showing in what way the texts potentially facilitate such reader responses.

FREE LOVE AND SATANIC SOPHISTRIES: Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*

My first example, Jacques Cazotte's (1719–1792) novella *Le Diable amoureux* ('The Devil in Love', 1772, revised edition 1776) is, as its title indicates, not British, but French. It has nonetheless been defined as Gothic by several scholars, and I will discuss it here as part of that genre (although its ending breaks with genre conventions).[37] *Le Diable amoureux* was a pioneering work in several ways. By blending the mimetic techniques of realism with supernatural events it made an important contribution to the emerging genre known in France as *le conte fantastique* ('the fantastic tale').[38] Antoine Faivre has stated that it further marked a breakthrough for esoteric themes in literature.[39] Finally, it represents a crucial step in the development of demonic women and femmes fatales as literary motifs.[40]

During three years in the late 1770s, Cazotte was a member of L'Ordre Martiniste, an esoteric group that strove to abrogate the fallen condition of individual man with the help of spirits. He left the order because it supported the French Revolution, while he was a staunch royalist.[41] Towards the end of his life, Cazotte suffered from delusions of grandeur and planned to initiate a sort of counter-revolution of the mystics using his supposed magical powers. Like many other conspiring royalists, he ended his days on the guillotine in 1792.[42] According to opinions he expressed during his final years, the

revolution was caused by a lack of religion, brought about by the wicked teachings of the Enlightenment philosophers. He believed that these spreaders of poison were literally controlled by demons, as were scientists, freemasons, and a great portion of the nation's women. The latter were all, he insisted, unable to reject demonic advances, just like Eve. Women, the accomplices of Satan, subsequently drag men with them to Hell.[43] In *Le Diable amoureux*, the Devil appears in the shape of a woman, and this may be a result of this line of reasoning, even though the evidence of him holding these views dates from twenty years later. As Kenneth J. Fleurant writes, however, it seems likely many of his ideas 'had been germinating for a number of years'.[44] It is worth mentioning here that Cazotte's devaluing of woman is hardly unique in eighteenth-century France, with Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764) and the Marquis d'Argens *Le Philosophe amoureux* (1737) as other examples. The real difference lies in Cazotte's 'spiritualization of evil underscoring woman's complicity and collusion with Satan'.[45]

Such rhetoric, we can note, had largely disappeared from mainstream Christian discourse by 1772, but was instead perpetuated in fiction by Cazotte and the other authors discussed in this chapter. This automatically meant that the theme became more ambiguous, since a novel is open to any reader's interpretation in a way that the more fixed Christian tradition had historically not been. In this context, it is telling that *Le Diable amoureux* is used by Tzvetan Todorov as a prime example of his definition of 'fantastic literature' (which is not an exact equivalent of the French genre already mentioned), a genre he delineates as marked by an unresolved hesitation regarding the reality of the supernatural.[46] Hesitation indeed permeates Cazotte's text, not only in this regard, and hence threatens to implode the ostensible morality of the tale that is laid down in the final chapter.[47]

The hero of Cazotte's tale is Alvare, a twenty-five-year-old captain in the king's guard in Naples. Along with some older colleagues, who are esotericists, he summons the Devil (designated Beelzebub) in an old ruin. Satan appears, first as a bizarre camel's head, then as a small spaniel dog, and finally as an androgynous page, Biondetto/Biondetta. Eventually, it becomes clear to Alvare that this is a young woman, and he begins to feel erotically attracted to her. She tries to persuade him she is not Satan in

disguise but a benevolent spirit of the air deeply in love with him, who can therefore grant him wonderful powers:

> I shall serve my conqueror, I shall instruct him on the sublimeness of his being, of whose privileges he is ignorant. With the powers whose dominion I will have relinquished, he subdues the spirits of all the spheres for us. He is made to be the king of the world, and I shall be its queen.[48]

This offer has echoes both of the serpent's words to Eve (Gen. 3:4–5), and Satan's offer of power over this world to Christ in the desert (Matt. 4:5–8; Luke 4:1–13). Later—in a garden, fittingly enough—Alvare reminds her of the promise 'to make me worthy of it [her having bound her destiny to his] by imparting to me knowledge which is not vouchsafed to the common run of men'.[49] Analyses of the novel often neglect to take into account that the temptation is here not only sexual, but that the metaphorical forbidden fruit also comprises esoteric knowledge and abilities. This notion of a demonic woman as an esoteric initiator recurs in Gothic novels like *Vathek* and *The Monk*. In Cazotte's tale, it is connected with premarital sex, as Biondetta says she can only share her wisdom if Alvare gives himself to her completely.[50] He refuses and says they must first be married, and for this they need the permission of his strict and pious Spanish mother. Biondetta protests that it is absurd their love should require her approval and holds a long and eloquent monologue on the merits of free love. Among other things, she says:

> To stifle a celestial flame, the only resort by which body and soul can act mutually upon one another and force themselves to concur in the necessary maintaining of their union! That is rather foolish, my dear Alvare! One must regulate these impulses, but sometimes one should yield to them; if they are thwarted they escape all at once, and reason no longer knows where to be seated in order to rule.[51]

Cazotte may have intended for this to be sinister sophistries from the iniquitous lips of Satan, but for readers with different values—both in his own time and in the centuries to come—the Satanic arguments probably seemed quite reasonable. According to Dorothea von Mücke, Biondetta's manner of reasoning is similar to how Enlightenment philosophers presented their views.[52] Cazotte hereby demonizes both freethinking, articulate women and the philosophers he loathed so much—already in 1741 he had attacked Voltaire and in 1753 he lashed out at Rousseau.[53] For a deeply conservative Catholic like Cazotte, independent thinking, rhetorical skill, and sexual desire were all likely to be things he felt were deeply inappropriate in a

woman, and this is an attempt to condemn these traits. Yet, he hereby paradoxically opens up the possibility of viewing the she-Devil as an appealing figure, since she represents attractive and admirable things for those with values radically diverging from Cazotte's.

After much hesitation, Alvare eventually surrenders to Biondetta's advances.[54] When they have made love, she tells him: 'I am the Devil, my dear Alvare, I am the Devil', however adding: 'I intend to gratify you wholly. You will already agree that I am not as revolting as slander would have it.'[55] The scene culminates in Biondetta disappearing and being replaced with the ghastly camel's head that Alvare originally summoned (figure 5.1). Arriving at his family castle, the hero is taken care of by his mother and reassured by a learned doctor that he has nothing to fear as long as he repents his sins and, with his mother's guidance, chooses a suitable wife.[56]

FIGURE 5.1 Alvare summons Satan, who appears in the form of a camel and subsequently takes on the shape of a woman. Illustration by Édouard de Beaumont, from the 1845 edition of Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*.

In the very first version of the novel, which was never published, Cazotte allowed Satan to win, with Alvare becoming his tool in spreading evil. However, he felt this was too gloomy for his cheerful French readers in search of light entertainment.[57] This ending would surely have been more in the spirit of the British Gothic novels, where it would be unthinkable for a hero to get intimate with Satan only to subsequently escape and then live happily ever after. The first published edition, of 1772, ended with Alvare

spurning Satan before their love is consummated, but his readers, he explains in the preface to the second edition (1776), found this too abrupt. Hence, he revised the text so that the couple was allowed to make love and Alvare then had to go to his mother to ask forgiveness for his sin. Historian Robert Muchembled suggests these different endings are related to contemporary battles over the real or illusory nature of the demonic. The unpublished version would, he argues, have been too clearly a siding with those who believed Satan was real. The 1772 edition also affirmed the reality of the demonic too overtly, while the ending of 1776 made it possible to interpret the narrative as mere delusions of the protagonist's mind. This compromise supposedly increased the novel's appeal to adherents of both sides in the debate, from the most sceptical to those with a very literal belief in the Devil.[58]

Another debate Cazotte was aware of is that concerning incubi and succubi from works like Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* ('On the Demonomania of Sorcerers', 1580) and Balthasar Bekker's *De betoverde Weerld* ('The Enchanted World', 1691), which are both mentioned in the novel.[59] Bodin's book emphasized the evil intentions of such spirits, while Bekker, who was more of an Enlightenment thinker, claimed spirits could not influence men.[60] Another famous contribution to this debate came from Paracelsus (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493–1541), who proposed that men could in fact gain great benefits from uniting with a spirit. The Paracelsian standpoint would have been familiar to Cazotte from Abbé de Villar's Rosicrucian novel *Le Comte de Gabalis* ('The Count de Gabalis', 1670), where the protagonist claims that it is a mistake to identify Paracelsus' benevolent elemental spirits with demons.[61] This is what Biondetta tries to make Alvare believe. Andriano contends that all three views—Biondetta as a kindly spirit of the air, an evil demon, or, as Bekker would have maintained, a figment of the young man's imagination—can find support in the text.[62] I find it difficult to see any real indications that she is a spirit of the air. The other two alternatives are both possible, though Biondetta as Satan appears overwhelmingly more so.

Dietmar Rieger insists that the novel must be read as an anti-philosophical *conte moral* (morality tale), rather than mere entertainment. Its purpose, he states, is to warn of the dangers of Enlightenment philosophy and rapid societal change.[63] The author himself also attests to there being a serious ideological message. In his postscript to the 1776 edition, he writes that the novel treats battles between principles and passions in a twofold allegory. Yet, he does not want to explain this allegorical meaning further as he feels it would rob the text of its magic.[64] Cazotte's biographer Edward Pease Shaw also sees the tale as deeply earnest at its core: 'Cazotte has dressed up the traditional battle between good and evil, relating the adventures of an eighteenth-century Adam, representing mankind, tempted by an Eve now identified with the devil.'[65]

Unlike Rieger and Shaw, later scholars have been keen to emphasize how polyphonous the tale is, lacking a firmly fixed moral message. Robert F. O'Reilly points to the absence of moral closure: 'The hero's libidinal urges are admitted and satisfied, as are his responsibilities to family and church. Neither the devil nor the church … nullifies the other.'[66] Brian Stableford sees the novel as the first in a long line of works where ostensibly evil figures are depicted in a more positive manner: '[T]he pleasure-denying morality of the church is severely questioned, and ultimately condemned, and though that was not Cazotte's aim it is easy to believe that—like Milton, according to Blake—he was "of the devil's party without knowing it." '[67] Joseph Andriano also proposes a parallel to Blake's words about Milton and holds up Biondetta's celebratory speech about the virtue of passion as the most stirring passage in the novel.[68] Tili Boon suggests that 'though Cazotte privately strove to persuade his contemporaries to return to traditional values, his fictional work contributes to a more liberal vision of society'.[69] Lawrence R. Porter similarly argues that Cazotte was not 'in complete control of his material'.[70] No doubt, the tale does in a way make Satan's arguments appear quite sensible and appealing. Satan is also presented in a manner that makes the figure seem very human and easy to feel sympathy for, and it is to some extent of less importance that all this may ultimately be clever tricks employed by the tempter. As the case of John Milton has shown, it is a precarious move to allow Satan to present his case with great persuasiveness. Libertines and other freethinkers would probably, as I have already suggested, have felt Biondetta was a grand heroine, and the likeliness

of such readings would have increased further on through the intertextual influence of the emerging tradition of literary Satanism.

Satan in the role of Alvare's page is at first described as androgynous, and Cazotte initially frequently shifts between *il* and *elle* (he and she) to designate this character, at times even in the same sentence. In Boon's reading, this is one of the ways in which the novel demonstrates that gender is a construct. Biondetta's unstable gender identity, and the theatrical aspects of how it is displayed to Alvare and his esotericist cohorts, gives support, Boon argues, to a Judith Butler-like view of gender as performance.[71] It is perhaps also possible to interpret Satan's changeable gender as a symbol of the threatening dissolution of fixed forms and categories that Cazotte felt was brought about by the false doctrines of the *philosophes*. As we have seen in chapter 2, making the Devil female is no innovation on Cazotte's part, and pertaining to this longer tradition as well, it can be seen as an expression of a threatening liminality in opposition to the safe and secure fixed categories of goodness.

From what we know, most of Cazotte's contemporaries did not think along these lines, instead perceiving the novel as 'badinage ingénieux' ('ingenious banter') and appreciating its 'gaité' ('gaiety'). In Germany, it influenced E. T. A. Hoffmann's short story 'Der Elementargeist' ('The Elemental Spirit', 1821).[72] More than thirty editions of *Le Diable amoureux* were published during the nineteenth century, and it was thus constantly available as a source of inspiration. It was also translated into other languages, like German (1780, 1792) and English (1793, 1800, 1810, 1830), and performed on stage in a variety of versions.[73]With the rise of Romanticism in France, it became very popular with French authors. Charles Nodier (1780–1844), for example, wrote a rather crude short story, 'Les Aventures de Thibaud de la Jacquière' ('The adventures of Thibaud de la Jacquière', in the collection *Infernaliana*, 1822), where Satan also assumes the shape of a young woman to entice a man to his doom. It ends with Beelzebub biting him in the throat to prevent him from crying out to Jesus for help.[74] Poets like Baudelaire explicitly referenced Cazotte, and Shaw claims that *Le Diable amoureux* 'certainly helped to nourish Baudelaire's diabolical conception of women'.[75] In England, Lord Byron discussed the novel with Lady Caroline Lamb during their stormy love affair in 1812, and Lady Caroline referred to Biondetta in a letter to her lover, in which she also enclosed cut-off locks of her pubic hair.

In another letter she designated herself Biondetta. It is also possible that the idea of gaining access to Byron's house by disguising herself as a young page, which she did at one time, was derived from this source.[76] The noble lady's appropriation of a demonic feminine identity can be seen as an interesting early example of a woman consciously acting out such a role, drawing on literature. Further, it is a safe assumption that both Lord Byron and Lady Caroline appreciated Biondetta's stirring speeches in praise of passion (and sexuality far removed from the conjugal bed) more than the pompous moralizing that rounds off the novella. This thus illustrates that a portion of the readers are likely to have sympathized primarily with the Devil's arguments in the text.

When Gerard de Nerval wrote the first critical-biographical essay (1845) about Cazotte, the reception of his work took a dramatic new turn. For a long time, a story had circulated about Cazotte supposedly having had a premonition of the revolution. Nerval now added that Cazotte, shortly after the publication of *Le Diable amoureux*, was visited by a representative of an esoteric order who believed him to be an initiate, since he had so exactly described magical secrets in his novella. Readers subsequently started to approach Cazotte's text 'in the hope of uncovering in it clues to occult secret societies and practises', as Dorothea von Mücke puts it.[77] Éliphas Lévi discusses Cazotte in his *Histoire de la magie* ('The History of Magic', 1860) and, while quite reserved regarding the idea of Cazotte having prophetic powers, grants that he knew or 'guessed' certain Kabbalistic teachings concerning demonic women that are on display in the novella.[78] Of course, Cazotte's rumoured ability to 'guess' such things on his own also points in the direction of the by now widespread view of him as a gifted mystic, as does Lévi's assurance that the text 'is filled with magical intuitions'.[79]*Le Diable amoureux*, then, was eventually perceived by many as more than mere entertainment. This no doubt helped make it what can in modern terms best be described as a "cult novel". Its themes of diabolical temptation, gender dissolution, and demonization of freethinking pro-sensual women were also such that they continued to hit the right note with subsequent generations. As we will see, it is very much a recurring point of reference for many later authors writing of demonic women. Further, it played an important role in sustaining the time-honoured feminization of Satan.

Like *Le Diable amoureux*, William Beckford's (1760–1844) *Arabian Nights*-inspired Gothic farce *Vathek* (1786) is also quite humorous. It can be perceived as a satirical variation on the Edenic temptation theme, but with the original twist that the Adam who falls is lured to his doom not by his spouse but by his mother. Vathek, the title character, is a hedonistic and decadent Caliph ruling a fictional Arabic state. His mother Carathis is Greek and practises the 'sciences and systems of her country which all good Mussulmans hold in such thorough abhorrence'.[80] In other words, she is a sorceress. She is also a connoisseur of all things dark and terrible, who 'enjoyed most whatever filled others with dread'.[81] Carathis's main objective in life is 'to obtain favour with the powers of darkness'.[82] She wants to see her son achieve a form of apotheosis by climbing a throne of power in the subterranean kingdom of Eblis (the Muslim Satan) and employs all manners of hideous spells and incantations to reach that goal. Carathis has black slave girls in her service, who form a sort of witches' coven under her leadership, in which they invoke the powers of darkness in ecstatic rituals.[83] Unlike the typical femme fatale of Gothic tales, Carathis is by no means a sexual temptress. At no point is she erotically involved with anyone. Moreover, she constantly dissuades her slaves and her son from sexual pleasures and endeavours to keep the focus on an esoteric quest for divine power instead of worldly pleasures.[84] In fact, sexual temptation is portrayed not as the cause of man's downfall, but as a distraction that makes man stray and lose sight of his inevitably ill-fated quest for secret knowledge.

Illustrating this, Vathek's consort Nouronihar evolves from a sensual creature to one more hungry for self-deification than even the Caliph himself (her 'impatience, if possible, exceeded his own'), urging him on in their march to the Prince of Darkness' subterranean palace.[85] She is the first to descend the steps leading down to it, much like Eve led the way in man's fall from the grace of God.[86] When Vathek feels his heart sink within him at the sight of Eblis—who is here portrayed in a sublime manner reminiscent of Milton's Satan—Nouronihar 'could not help admiring the person of Eblis', and thus the special bond between woman and Satan in the novel is emphasized.[87] The story finally takes a grim turn, and in the surprisingly serious and sombre climax the young lovers are harshly punished by the figure they believed to be their benefactor. When they receive eternal

damnation instead of (permanent, for they do indeed receive it for a short while) divine power from Eblis, Vathek blames his mother: 'the principles by which Carathis perverted my youth, have been the sole cause of my perdition!'[88] Carathis is summoned, and damned as well, but first praised by Eblis as one 'whose knowledge, and whose crimes, have merited a conspicuous rank in my empire'.[89]

In what will be a recurring pattern, Satan does not grant any lasting bliss to his followers. But Carathis has—perhaps precisely by being a much-feared Satanist witch—successfully led a life as a highly unconventional and free female up to that point. Nouronihar is helped by the esoteric quest to develop into more than a simple object for Vathek's ravenous sexual desires. The ultimately sad fate they meet could be interpreted as a punishment for such 'improper' female behaviour, but several factors complicate such a reading. On a surface level, it might seem the authorial voice is on the side of morality and order. For example, on the final page it exclaims:

> Such was, and such should be, the punishment of unrestrained passions and atrocious deeds! Such shall be, the chastisement of that blind curiosity, which would transgress those bounds the Creator has prescribed to human knowledge; and such the dreadful disappointment of that restless ambition, which, aiming at discoveries reserved for beings of a supernatural order, perceives not, through its infatuated pride, that the condition of man upon earth is to be—humble and ignorant.[90]

But this type of moralizing is constantly deflated by the author's obvious mirthful pleasure in the descriptions of how Vathek torments and ridicules symbols of morality, religion, and authority. As Roger Lonsdale points out, this applies especially to the wicked Caliph's cruelties against older male figures of authority (e.g. setting fire to their beards). Moreover, the pious figures in the text are all described in a very sarcastic manner.[91] It thus becomes hard to take the moral principles proclaimed seriously, given that all their earthly representatives are derided. Robert D. Hume, reasoning along the same lines, has remarked on the novel's 'riotous energy, obvious fascination with the protagonist's crimes, and burlesque exaggerations', which, coupled with 'Beckford's steady stream of flippancies and snide remarks' makes this a rather subversive text.[92] Additionally, for contemporary as well as later readers, certain much-talked-about scandals surrounding the author's name must have made his moralistic declarations hard to accept at face value. Beckford was homosexual, and indiscrete enough to have an affair with the adolescent son of a high-ranking nobleman,

and therefore became *persona non grata* in polite society despite being one of the richest people in England. He was also known for costly, eccentric building projects and extravagant and theatrical parties, one of which he later described as involving decorations making the family's house appear like 'a Demon Temple deep beneath the earth set apart for tremendous mysteries'. In other words, his public persona no doubt had shades of the sensual and depraved Caliph Vathek.[93]

Vathek can be considered a minor classic of English literature. Among its many enthusiastic readers we find names like Byron, Edgar Allan Poe, and Algernon Swinburne.[94] In the nineteenth century, the novel was published seven times in French (with the 1876 version having special weight due to a preface by Mallarmé) and ten times in English. Between Beckford's death in 1844 and the year 1900 at least thirty-three English editions were issued, and before 1914 it was also published five times in German.[95] At first, it was not known that Beckford was the author of the novel, and it generally received fine reviews. The *Critical Review* praised it as a story whose moral was applicable in 'every climate and religion'.[96] One critic, in the *English Review*, was less pleased with the moral and protested: 'Indolence and childishness are represented as the source of happiness; while ambition and the desire of knowledge, so laudable and meritorious when properly directed, are painted in odious colours, and punished as crimes.' Once it became known that *Vathek* was written by the infamous libertine and pederast William Beckford, this unavoidably coloured how it was read, and it acquired a scandalous reputation.[97] The moral of the novel is subverted both by this extratextual authorial persona (which could be considered part of the novel's extended text, so to speak) and by the tone of the narrative itself. Vathek, Carathis, and Nouronihar are the protagonists of the novel, and no significant good characters (aside from rather impersonal non-human genies) are present to balance their cheerful evil. This is not to say that their actual deeds (e.g. child sacrifice) could possibly be read as praiseworthy.

Written a century or so after the last major persecutions of witches took place, *Vathek* could be perceived as a comical literary perpetuation of the same misogynistic tradition—where woman is viewed as being particularly close to the Devil—that once incited harsh penalizing of supposed sorceresses. However, *Vathek* might also be read as a tribute to a transgressive 'evil' lifestyle, where woman as the Devil's helper leads men

into a realm of freedom where the rules of patriarchal religion (here Islam) are discarded. In a way, the Satanic cult of Eblis is non-patriarchal. Its main proponent in the story is Carathis, practising decadently intricate and at times "hysterical" (both could be perceived as being coded as feminine) rites very different from the constrained and simple prayers of the novel's exclusively male authority figures representing the Islamic faith. This is paired with Carathis's and Nouronihar's dominant and enterprising 'unfeminine' behaviour. Their punishment would then be a condemnation of their transgression of the boundaries of suitable womanly conduct. However, considering the ambiguity that the novel as a whole is imbued with, these characters may also be understood as feisty and audacious anti-heroines—heroic villains in the typical Gothic style.

'A WILD IMPERIOUS MAJESTY': FEMALE EMPOWERMENT BY BLACK MAGIC IN *THE MONK*

Even more influential than *Vathek* was Matthew Gregory Lewis's (1775–1818) only novel *The Monk* (1796). Sir Walter Scott, summarizing its impact, even wrote that '*The Monk* was so highly popular that it seemed to create an epoch in our literature'.[98] It was widely read by Romantics in both England and France, as well as many others, of course: it was one of the major bestsellers of its time and was soon translated into several other languages.[99] Its wide distribution does not mean it was generally well liked, and Coleridge wrote in the *Critical Review* that it is 'a romance, which if any parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale', and accused Lewis of blasphemy.[100]*European Magazine* drew parallels between *The Monk* and the anti-religious literature that appeared in France around the time of the revolution.[101] Clery encapsulates the image of the novel in public debate as follows: '[T]he subversion of morality and social institutions, which was its subject, was now publicly announced to be its end.'[102] This view turned out to be quite long-lived, and an obituary over Lewis in the London newspaper *The Courier* described the novel as 'a seductive story' dedicated to 'the propagation of evil', and its author as 'a reckless defiler of the public mind' who was 'compounding poison for the multitude'.[103] A minority of critics were instead impressed with it as a skilfully told cautionary tale warning against all manners of temptations.[104]

Lewis wrote *The Monk* when he was only nineteen years old, in less than ten weeks. Through its success, he was granted admission to aristocratic circles and became acquainted with Byron and the Shelleys.[105] As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Lewis served as a Member of Parliament alongside his writing career. This made Coleridge even more upset, since it meant that the immoral filth in the novel had issued forth from the pen of a legislator.[106]

The Monk has often been described as a piece of plagiarism borrowing rather too freely from Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*. This objection was raised already in an article in the *Monthly Review* in 1797.[107] It was aggravated by an 1810 English translation of Cazotte's novella, where the translator had incorporated parts from *The Monk* into the text and dedicated the book to Lewis 'without permission', as a not-so-subtle hint. This at first misled scholars, for example Mario Praz, but Louis F. Peck revealed the hoax in the 1950s.[108] Lewis himself denied being influenced by his French colleague. However, as Joseph Andriano emphasizes, the similarities are truly striking, and even if Lewis had not read *Le Diable amoureux*, it was so well known on the continent and in England that he may still have heard about its plot indirectly.[109] No matter what the truth of the matter is, a strong intertextual bond between the two has existed from the start due to the persistent accusations of plagiarism, and it probably influenced many readers' perception of *The Monk*. Concerning sources of inspiration it seems clear, at least, that Lewis drew liberally on anticlerical dramas composed in the context of the French revolutionary theatre, which helps explain the negative portrayal of the representatives of Christianity in the tale.[110]

Ambrosio, the monk of the novel's title, is a famously virtuous and chaste young cleric in the Madrid of olden times. Satan sends temptation in the form of the charming young novice Rosario, later revealed to be a young girl, Matilda, and ultimately exposed as a demon in the shape of a woman. Matilda is at first a typical sexual temptress. Paralleling the Eden story in Genesis, she begins her assault on Ambrosio's virtue in—where else?—the cloister's garden.[111] When they meet again in the garden, she asks him to pluck a rose for her, but he is bitten by a poisonous snake (rather obviously underlining the narrative the garden scenes refer to) hiding in the rose bush. During his convalescence, Matilda sucks the poison from his veins, falls ill herself, and manages to convince Ambrosio that her love for him is pure. Subsequently, they have sexual intercourse.[112] After she has accomplished his

fall and he is racked by guilt, she gives a fairly convincing monologue on the value of love and pleasure as opposed to the unnatural state of celibacy, not unlike that uttered by Cazotte's Biondetta:

> In what consists ours [their guilt], unless in the opinion of an ill-judging World? Let that World be ignorant of them, and our joys become divine and blameless! Unnatural were your vows of Celibacy; Man was not created for such a state; And were Love a crime, God never would have made it so sweet, so irresistible! Then banish those clouds from your brow, my Ambrosio! Indulge in those pleasures freely, without which life is a worthless gift: Cease to reproach me with having taught you, what is bliss, and feel equal transports with the Woman who adores you![113]

Of course, Lewis and his Anglican countrymen would have sympathized with Matilda's critique of cloistered life. Hereby, a typical Gothic mixing of good and evil occurs: the diabolical agitator propagates views that are not opposed to those of the author and most readers. In the 1920s, Finnish scholar Eino Railo pointed out how the novel is

> undeniably imbued with a conscious spirit of opposition. In spite of its incoherence it was well adapted to dispose the reader critically towards the Bible, as regards, for instance, its suitability as reading for the young. It is impossible to mistake the spirit of freethinking breathed by the book.[114]

The passage Railo refers to is one where the Bible is deemed unacceptable for a young girl to read because 'the annals of a Brothel would scarcely furnish a greater choice of indecent expressions'.[115] It is unclear in the text whether these are Lewis's own opinions as narrator, or those of the girl's mother. In a manner now familiar to us from other Gothic novels, this is but one example of a thoroughgoing questioning and iconoclastic tone. Hereby, the morality of the tale becomes somewhat ambiguous, and the narrator turns into a potential ally of Matilda's scepticism towards established norms. As it happens, the latter is also a transgressor of gendered limitations. Having ritually called upon the aid of Hell to cure herself from the ill effects of the serpent's poison sucked from her beloved's veins, Matilda exclaims: 'Oh! that I were permitted to share with you my power, and raise you as high above the level of your sex, as one bold deed has exalted me above mine!'[116] Consorting with demons, then, has according to Matilda annulled the restrictions and shortcomings of her gender.

Ambrosio soon tires of his mistress and falls in love with the innocent Antonia (who, to his utter horror, is eventually revealed to be his own sister). Matilda takes this change of affections in her stride and tries to persuade him to draw on the power of Satan to help conquer his new love. She assures

him: ‘I saw the Daemon obedient to my orders; I saw him trembling at my frown, and found, that instead of selling my soul to a Master, my courage had purchased for me a Slave.’ The monk remains unconvinced, but she does not give up, claiming that ‘[t]he Enemy of Mankind is my Slave, not my Sovereign’. Quite angered by her former lover’s cowardly nature, she exclaims: ‘That mind which I esteemed so great and valiant, proves to be feeble, puerile, and grovelling, a slave to vulgar errors, and weaker than a Woman’s.’[117] But Ambrosio refuses to ally himself with the enemy of God, prompting Matilda to ask:

> Are you then God’s Friend at present? Have you not broken your engagements with him, renounced his service, and abandoned yourself to the impulse of your passions? Are you not planning the destruction of innocence, the ruin of a Creature, whom He formed in the mold of Angels? If not Daemons, whose aid would you invoke to forward this laudable design?[118]

This monologue may have been read, by those who saw themselves as sinners, as an exhortation that it is best to embrace one’s sinful nature, if that is one’s proven disposition. In response, Ambrosio exclaims: ‘That scoffing tone, that bold and impious language is horrible in every mouth, but most so in a Woman’s.’[119] This is but one example of how Matilda’s (Satanic) transgressions against gendered expectations are a consistent theme. Eventually Ambrosio is persuaded by her arguments. Matilda brings him down into a catacomb and performs a dramatic ritual (figure 5.2). Like Carathis, Matilda enters a sort of ecstatic or hysterical state in order to contact the Devil: ‘She uttered a loud and piercing shriek. She appeared to be seized with an access of delirium; She tore her hair, beat her bosom, used the most frantic gestures, and drawing the poignard from her girdle plunged it into her left arm.’[120] Matilda’s power is a female power, a threatening hysterical ecstasy in opposition to the calm prayers of the monks, or perhaps a Satanic parody of the famous ecstasies of the female saints. The ecstatic could here also be perceived as an inversion of the control ‘proper’ females should evince over themselves.

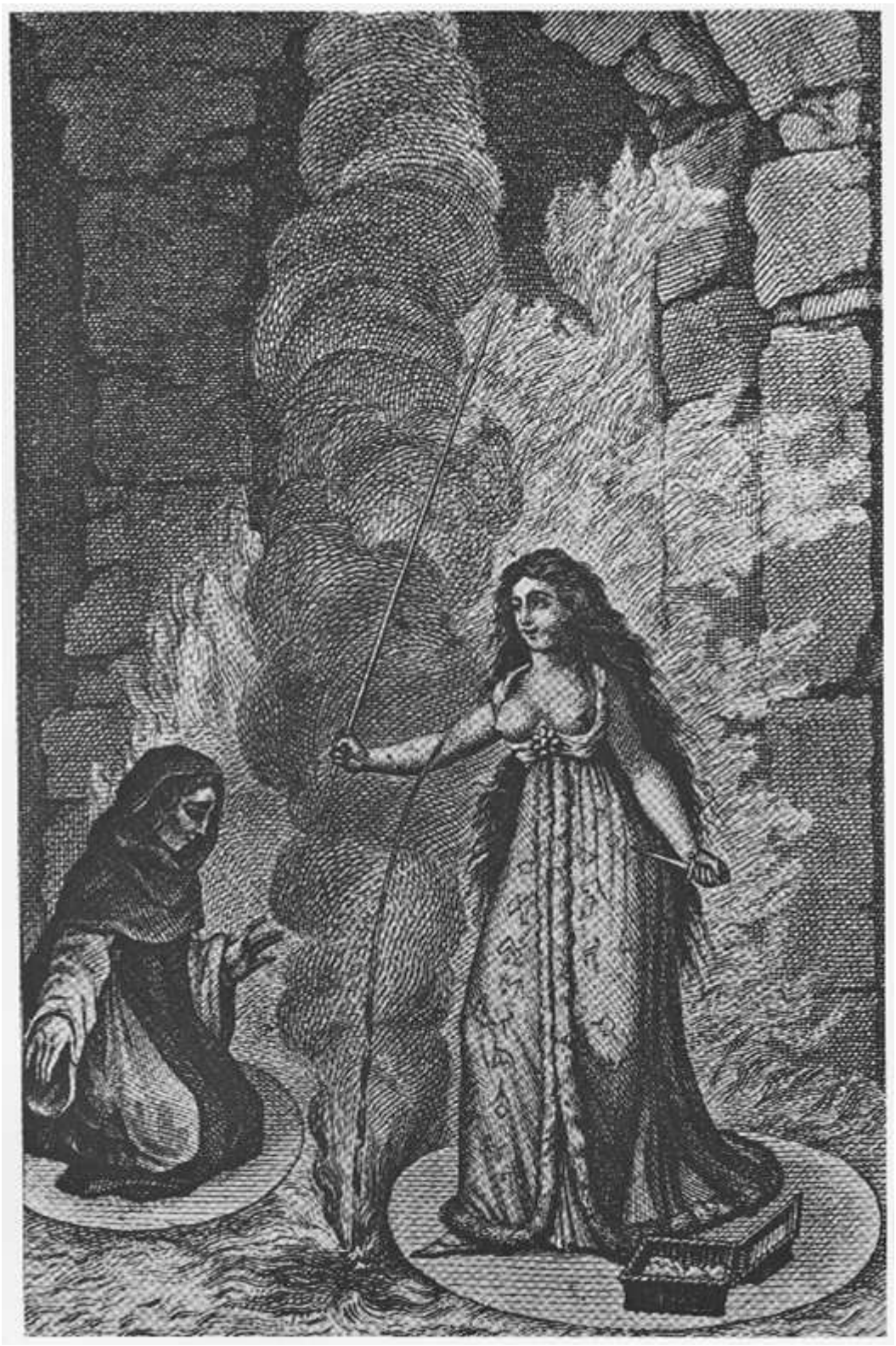

FIGURE 5.2 Matilda, empowered by her collusion with the powers of darkness, works her magic while an awe-struck Ambrosio looks on. Illustration from a French edition of *The Monk*, 4 vols. (Paris:

Maradan, 1797).

Her invocation makes Lucifer himself appear, in the shape of a sublimely beautiful naked youth. The sorceress brings the apparition to its knees with her magic powers, forcing him to do her bidding. This represents a reversal of how the relationship between witches and Satan was commonly perceived. The ability to command demons was typically viewed as something reserved for male magicians employing God's power to make the demons kneel, whereas witches were slaves to Satan.[121] Here, however, the dark arts seem to empower Matilda, rather than rob her of her agency. When Ambrosio later wants to sleep with Matilda again, in spite of not really being in love with her anymore, she flatly refuses him. Her ability to do so is certainly grounded in the respect she has instilled in the monk by her proficiency in black magic.

Towards the end of the novel, Matilda and Ambrosio are captured by the inquisition. Matilda finds a way to escape and shows up in the monk's prison cell. She is described as most impressive:

> She had quitted her religious habit. She now wore a female dress, at once elegant and splendid: A profusion of diamonds blazed upon her robes, and her hair was confined by a coronet of Roses. In her right hand She held a small Book: A lively expression of pleasure beamed upon her countenance; But still it was mingled with a wild imperious majesty, which inspired the Monk with awe.[122]

The sorceress now invites the monk to join her, warning, however: 'I purchase my liberty at a dear, at a dreadful price!' She asks him: 'Dare you spring without fear over the bounds, which separate Men from Angels?' Doing so would enable Ambrosio to live out all his sensuous fantasies here and now, she explains, and would raise him 'to the level of superior Beings'.[123] This self-deification can be related to how Matilda has become a woman of unprecedented power and authority by employing black magic.

When he has been sentenced to death, Ambrosio finally surrenders and signs his soul over to the Devil in order to escape. Satan now reveals that Matilda is a 'subordinate but crafty spirit' who has assumed a human shape in order to ensnare Ambrosio, an endeavour that has, at this moment, reached full success.[124] This revelation does not mean, as many scholars erroneously state, that Matilda is in fact a male spirit. She might just as well be a female spirit or entirely androgynous, the text does not say. It is also a plot twist that does not harmonize with what has gone before. Andriano opines that in

making Matilda a demon in disguise, Lewis 'forgets or deliberately ignores several earlier passages that unequivocally evince Matilda's humanity'. This is hard to argue against, since the all-knowing and objective authorial voice has at the outset of the novel repeatedly described Matilda as innocent of anything but female desire.[125] Praz similarly underscores how Matilda during the major part of the narrative 'enlists the sympathy of the reader for the humanity of her passion'.[126] This parallels Cazotte's depiction of Biondetta. No matter what they are later revealed to be, the major portion of the portrayal is designed to awaken sympathy in the reader. Additionally, both are given the opportunity to state their case in long, silver-tongued monologues.

Whether or not Matilda is really female, male, or androgynous, is perhaps ultimately somewhat beside the point. The interesting thing is that for all but a few pages of the novel she is portrayed as a woman, and a much-emancipated one at that, who gains her authority and power by consorting with the powers of darkness. This fact has frequently been ignored. For instance, Kari Winter states that '[w]omen who are at all self-assertive in *The Monk* are tortured or killed'.[127] However, Winter forgets Matilda. Although she in the end is revealed not to be a 'real' woman, she is a creature of female gender (and portrayed as human all the way up to the last chapter of the book) who gets away with being self-assertive and dominant without being punished—and she does so by allying herself with Satan. 'Real', non-demonic women are not allowed to be strong and confident, and are harshly reprimanded if they try, but a Satanist witch (later revealed to be a demoness) is. This potentially makes her a heroine for readers sympathetic to female empowerment.

What we know from Lewis's letters of his ideas about women hardly indicates he had any feminist sympathies. Writing to his mother in 1804, when she considered trying to earn money as an author, he threatened to leave the country should she attempt anything of the sort, adding: 'I always consider a female author to be a half-man.' According to Virginia Allen, the moral lesson of *The Monk* is: 'ladies! be delicate; modest, retiring! Be Antonia. Do not be assertive, ambitious, noticeable—you might turn into Matilda!'[128] But for someone with a positive view of women's emancipation, the demonic Matilda might seem a potential symbol of empowerment, something that perhaps worried contemporary critics. As mentioned, several reviews expressed the opinion that the goal of the novel was the disruption of

the moral and social order. Presumably, it was feared young men would imitate Ambrosio's evil deeds, and young women would follow in the footsteps of the horrid and demonic Matilda. This reception shows *The Monk* to be yet another example of how Gothic novels are very often permeated with a strange enthusiasm for its villains and their antisocial, rebellious deeds, rendering the texts' moral message open to debate.

'A WILD, ARDENT, AND IRREPRESSIBLE SPIRIT': *Zofloya*

The main subject of *The Monk* is the temptation of a male by Satan, using a woman as his agent. The theme of (Satanic) female empowerment is present, but not central to the proceedings. It is nevertheless significant in terms of establishing a literary tradition, one product of which is Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or the Moor* (1806). This novel has been considered by some critics to be a simple rehash of *The Monk*, but with a woman, the temperamental Victoria, as the lead character. From the outset, Victoria is described in terms reminiscent of Milton's Satan: 'beautiful and accomplished as an angel', but at the same time

> proud, haughty, and self-sufficient—of a wild, ardent, and irrepressible spirit, indifferent to reproof, careless of censure—of an implacable, revengeful, and cruel nature, and bent upon gaining the ascendancy in whatever she engaged.[129]

The authorial voice repeatedly states that Victoria's eventual moral downfall is to a great extent ultimately brought about by her mother's sinfulness. The latter, a respectable married woman, is seduced by a certain Ardolph in—again!—a garden. Ardolph is described in distinctly diabolical terms as 'a demon [who] would put on the semblance of an angel'.[130] This seduction of an Eve by a Satan foreshadows, and indirectly causes, the literal seduction by Satan that eventually becomes her daughter's fate. When Victoria is imprisoned by her mother and Ardolph, in the house of a pious and strict relative of the latter, she is confined to a garden for her daily walks.[131] Beautiful though this garden may be, she longs to break free from it and the choking Christian morality propagated by its unkind owner. Her escape is thus a sort of fall, but a highly intentional and conscious one, motivated by a desire for autonomy from the ruler of the garden—much like the sovereign condition the serpent promises Eve she will reach if she eats from the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:5.

Victoria subsequently marries, but falls in love with her husband's brother, Henriquez. In a dream, which takes place in yet another garden, Victoria is approached by Henriquez's Moorish servant Zofloya, who offers to help her win the heart of the man she loves (this, of course, parallels how Milton's Eve is first approached by Satan in a dream). Like Ambrosio in *The Monk*, Victoria is hesitant about accepting the help offered by the tempter.[132] Also like him, she is persuaded to do so (in a garden, once more) by a clever monologue uttered by the tempter, a tempter who at the climax of the novel in fact turns out to be the Devil himself. He, for example, argues as follows:

> Surely the conscience of Victoria is not subjugated to a confessor? From whence then arises this unexpected demur? and what is the boasted supremacy of man, if, eternally, he must yield his happiness to the paltry suggestions of scholastic terms, or the pompous definitions of right and wrong? His reasoning mind, then, is given him only for his torment, and to wage war against his happiness; yet what cause can be adduced, why *another* must be permitted to stand between him, and his fair prospects, overshadowing them with hopeless gloom?[133]

Zofloya declares his admiration for Victoria's 'inflexible spirit'—quite naturally, since this makes her much like him, the angel whose sin was pride.[134] Her spirit is not only Satanic; it is also increasingly described as masculine. This renders her highly unattractive to Henriquez, who is struck with horror by 'her strong noble features, her dignified carriage, her authoritative tone—her boldness, her insensibility'.[135] He much prefers a young and gentle orphan girl called Lilla. Victoria herself therefore begins to wish that 'this unwieldy form could be compressed into the fairy delicacy of hers, these bold masculine features assume the likeness of her baby face!'[136] Zofloya protests, however: '[C]all not that graceful form unwieldy, nor to those noble and commanding features offer such indignity.'[137] He continues praising her: '[N]oble intrepid Victoria! mark me, for truly do I love, and glory in your firm unshrinking spirit.'[138] Zofloya-Satan, then, appreciates an independent woman, whereby female independence and strength are portrayed as literally demonic.

In a jealous rage, Victoria stabs Lilla to death, a scene that James A. Dunn proposes 'resonates with a symbolic intent to destroy this false feminine ideal'.[139] When he reveals his true nature to her, Satan enthusiastically tells Victoria: 'Few venture far as thou hast ventured in the alarming paths of sin', and ultimately her reward is destruction at Satan's hand, just like the fate Ambrosio met in *The Monk*.[140] At this point, the Devil gloats: 'Behold me as

I am!—no longer that which I appeared to be, but the sworn enemy of all created nature, by men called—SATAN! … Thus hath my triumph been richly completed, thou art at once *betrayed* and *cursed*!'[141] Zofloya then throws her from a cliff. The final words of the novel are, as customary in the genre, an explanation of the morality of the tale, which affirms the actual existence of a fearful spirit of evil:

> Reader—consider not this as a romance merely. —Over their passions and their weaknesses, mortals cannot keep a curb too strong. The progress of vice is gradual and imperceptible, and the archenemy ever waits to take advantage of the failings of mankind, whose destruction is his glory! That his seductions may prevail, we dare not doubt; for can we otherwise account for those crimes, dreadful and repugnant to nature, which human beings are sometimes tempted to commit? Either we must suppose that the love of evil is born within us (which would be an insult to the Deity), or we must attribute them (as appears more consonant with reason) to the suggestions of infernal influence.[142]

Such attempts by Gothic authors at claiming their lurid, grisly novels are in fact edifying reading in the service of public morality tend to come across as slightly hypocritical, to say the least, yet they are very much part of the standard protocol of the genre. According to Dunn, it is also genre conventions that render Victoria's brutal end inevitable:

> Typical of the Gothic genre in fiction, Dacre's novels fail to imagine ways of negotiating extremes: on the one hand, there is a real ideological liberation achieved as Dacre sets her women free from the destiny of passive suffering so widely represented and accepted by Gothic conventions; on the other hand, her women shed their 'feminine' destinies in search of some form of sexual justice only to find themselves disastrously 'masculinized', selfishly lusty and aggressive.[143]

I agree with Dunn's analysis that 'real ideological liberation' of an ephemeral variety can be observed in *Zofloya* but that the constraining structure ultimately proves impossible to break free from in any sustainable way. While this is indeed in accordance with the conventions of the Gothic genre, I would argue that the unattainability is not really that strongly gendered. Victoria has no chance to achieve true liberty, but this seems an equally hopeless project for figures like Lewis's Ambrosio. Gothic rebellion, just like Satan's, is always doomed from the outset. This did not stop more or less antinomically disposed readers—like Byron, Percy Shelley, and many others—from appreciating these unsuccessful anti-heroes as glorious rebels. It seems likely Victoria should have been received similarly by some, though it is difficult to corroborate, since we know little

of actual contemporary reader reactions aside from the voices of professional critics (more on which presently).

There is a comparable dearth of knowledge about the woman behind the pseudonym Charlotte Dacre, who was probably born as Charlotte King or Rey, in 1771 or 1772. She published four novels, of which *Zofloya* is the second.[144] Dacre was well known enough in her day and age for Byron to mention her as the author of 'sundry novels in the style of the first edition of the Monk' in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1808).[145] Both Percy Shelley and Algernon Swinburne counted *Zofloya* among their favourite novels. Critics were, mildly put, not always as enthusiastic. For instance, the reviewer in the *New Literary Journal* claimed in his harsh hatchet job on *Zofloya* that its author was 'afflicted with the dismal malady of maggots in the brain'.[146] Unsurprisingly, the fact that *Zofloya* was written by a woman upset reviewers, and one complained that there was a

> voluptuousness of language and allusion, pervading these volumes, which we should have hoped, that the delicacy of a female pen would have refused to trace; and there is an exhibition of wantonness or harlotry, which we would have hoped, that the delicacy of the female mind, would have been shocked to imagine.[147]

Such gendered attacks did not stop Dacre's novels from becoming popular, and *Zofloya* was printed twice, translated into both French and German and shortened into a chapbook with the title *The Daemon of Venice* (1812).[148] Dacre's father, the Jewish banker and author John King, knew Godwin, Byron, and Shelley. He himself was something of a political dissident, who was later involved in several scandals (among them one where he was accused of being a sex criminal). His daughter, being of Jewish descent and having such a father, probably felt herself a bit of an outsider from early on. It is hard, partly because of lacking biographical information, to pin down Charlotte Dacre's views on politics and gender issues. In her writings, she could attack feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, but that does not necessarily mean she advocated women staying at home, bowing down to male authority and keeping all their passions under lid.[149]

Adriana Craciun attaches great significance to the pen name Rosa Matilda that Dacre utilized when contributing poems to *The Morning Post* (something she did between 1803 and 1814, or possibly up until 1822) (figure 5.3). Interestingly, this alias combines the two names employed by the female demon in *The Monk*. According to Craciun, Dacre's 'conscious and public

allegiance with Lewis's demonic woman complicates any unproblematic reliance on the moralistic elements throughout her works'.[150] It might also be possible to interpret Dacre's admonitions ironically, even though most of her contemporary readers probably did not read them in such a manner, and it remains an open question if she herself had ironic intentions or some sort of symbolic sympathy for the Devil (overall, there is little to indicate this). The *General Review* (1806) pointed out that 'Zofloya has no pretention to rank as a moral work', and Craciun agrees: she wants to situate the novel in the 'amoral' tradition of Sade and Matthew Gregory Lewis.[151]

In accordance with this, Victoria's violent death at Satan's hand is in a manner nullified by Lilla's earlier brutal end. Neither the conformist 'proper' female nor the rebellious emancipated one gets out of the story alive. Both the innocent and the guilty are killed, and the novel does not reach a moral equilibrium at the end: no good woman is left to embody a return to the proper order of things once the anomaly has been erased. There is no this-worldly reward for goodness.[152] The novel offers only two possible options for women: to be like Lilla or to be like Victoria. Lilla may be praised by the authorial voice, albeit with quite limited enthusiasm, but Victoria is after all the novel's heroine. Unlike the vapid Lilla, she is a detailed character, thus being a more logical choice for reader identification, wicked though she may be. Craciun views the real point of Victoria as being her destabilization of the categories woman and female, not that she offers a feasible alternative to accepted gender roles.[153] But even if, for most nineteenth-century female readers, she hardly emerged as a reasonable alternative, considered as a whole, some aspects of this character may have been appealing. As Craciun correctly points out, the rebellious, self-assertive woman who is in league with Satan gains at least temporal freedom from patriarchal institutions (father, church, and husband) with the Devil's help.[154] She also rebels against proper femininity in a very explicit manner. Her rebellion is thus "feminist" in some sense, but it is not really held up as laudable. Even so, Victoria is perhaps the most fully drawn and developed "Satanic feminist" in early nineteenth-century literature, and the text is certainly more than a little undecided on the point of sympathizing with her or not. Michasiw suggests this is the reason why Dacre has been excluded from the literary canon:

> [T]hough Dacre's narrator reminds us of Victoria's corruption on regular occasions, she appears entirely in sympathy with most, if not all, of her protagonist's actions. The suspicion that Dacre's narrator is of the devil's party and knows it perfectly well is unavoidable and has done much to justify Dacre's consignment to literary oblivion.[155]

As we have seen, such suspicions of sympathy for the Devil have hounded most Gothic authors from the moment the novels were published, and their obvious enthusiasm for their anti-heroes and rather too strong fascination with salacious descriptions of their misdeeds makes it easy to understand why. Dacre's writing under the pseudonym Rosa Matilda also points in the direction of a troublesome identification with bold, independent representatives of the demonic feminine.

FIGURE 5.3 Charlotte Dacre (Charlotte King/Rey, 1771/2–1825), author of *Zofloya*, who also utilized the demonic pseudonym Rosa Matilda (in reference to Lewis's demon woman Matilda).

AMBIGUOUS INITIATION: *MELMOTH THE WANDERER*

Unlike Biondetta, Carathis, Matilda, and Victoria, the heroine of the central episode in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Immalee, is not an evil woman. The title character is an agent of the Devil, an immortal and cynical eternal wayfarer in the Wandering Jew mould.[156] At one point Melmoth defends the Devil, saying: 'Enemy of mankind! … Alas! how

absurdly is that title bestowed on the great angelic chief, —the morning star fallen from its sphere!'[157] Melmoth is not merely the Devil's emissary and apologist. He himself displays many characteristics of the Devil and is an obvious example of the Gothic tendency to project Satan's features onto human characters instead of actually letting the Prince of Darkness make a literal appearance. Aside from all the unappealing parts of his personality, which serve to make him an anti-hero with an emphasis on anti, Melmoth also has some things about him that were likely to endear him to freethinking readers. For example, he has 'an ease which appeared more the result of independence of thought, than of acquired habitudes of society'.[158] The novel is constructed as a Chinese box, with overlapping narratives presented by a multitude of authorial voices. One of the narrators says about a criminal monk that there are features in him that 'arrays crime in the dazzling robe of magnanimity, and makes us admire the fallen spirit, with whom we dare not sympathize'.[159] It would be careless to conclude from such statements that Maturin, who was an Anglican clergyman, admired the Devil (or his representative Melmoth). He was, however, clearly fascinated by him in a manner more reminiscent of the Satanic school of Romanticism than of orthodox Anglicanism. *Melmoth* is a complicated text, some might even say hilariously convoluted, and a central narratological feature is the polyphonous way in which the tale is told. Showcasing contrasting perspectives may hence be one of Maturin's main points, and that of those of the Devil's party would simply be one of them.

On a desolate island, Melmoth meets Immalee, a Spanish girl who as a child was the sole survivor of a shipwreck. Like Eve, she is a complete innocent, and Melmoth plays the part of the serpent, opening her eyes to good and evil (mostly evil). With the help of an amazingly efficient pair of binoculars, he shows her the nefariousness of colonial tyranny, suffering caused by economic injustice, the horrors of war, and the cruelty of religions. Immalee's response is ambivalent, she

> turned on him a glance that seemed to at once thank and reproach him for her painful initiation into the mysteries of a new existence. She had, indeed, tasted of the tree of knowledge, and her eyes were opened, but its fruit was bitter to her taste.[160]

When she catches sight of Christians practising their rites, Melmoth is forced to admit they are not as bad as the rest of the people she has seen, and she decides to become a Christian herself. He explains to her that not even

Christianity is a force of good, however, since many of its earthly representatives are corrupt.[161] Melmoth continues to rant about the evils of mankind, in an emotional yet logically well-argued monologue that Maturin apparently felt was a bit too convincing, since he inserted a footnote stating that 'the sentiments ascribed to the stranger [Melmoth] are diametrically opposite to mine', this being the very reason he 'put them into the mouth of the enemy of mankind'.[162] The footnote was probably introduced because Melmoth here also criticizes monarchy. Maturin would have been aware of the dangers should the authorities believe these were his own opinions.[163]

Immalee sheds tears over the sad state of things and tells Melmoth: '[Y]ou have taught me the joy of grief.' Her earlier declaration about the fruit of knowledge being bitter is now revoked, since she states: 'I weep and my tears are delicious.' Melmoth has given her a broader scope of emotion than she had when she 'only smiled', and one of the new items on her emotional palette is love.[164] The love she has learned makes her start to feel fear of the weather, perhaps part of 'the mysterious terror, which always trembles at the bottom of the hearts of those who dare to love'.[165] She tells her dark mentor that she loves him because he has taught her 'to think, to feel, and to weep'.[166] It is hence difficult to interpret the initiation Melmoth has given her as one-sidedly negative. She has after all learnt how to love and gained a broader register of feelings. Moreover, in spite of Maturin's reservations, Melmoth most of all seems like a speaker of inconvenient and difficult truths, rather than a lying seducer. He is, in fact, always truthful, and functions as a voice of cultural criticism, much like the ambivalent Lucifer in Byron's *Cain*, published the following year. Indirectly, Immalee now indulges in a kind of Satanism, since her emotions are entirely centred on 'the ill-chosen object of their idolatry', Melmoth, who is to some extent the Satan of the story. In a somewhat more direct pledge of Satanic allegiance, she also explains to him that '[w]hom you serve, I know not, but him will *I* serve'.[167]

Later on, Immalee is returned to her family in Spain. Melmoth seeks her out again, and they meet in secret in—predictably enough—a garden. Against her will, she is to be married to a man she does not know. Melmoth offers to help her escape: 'Speak, shall I be here at this hour tomorrow night, to conduct you to liberty and—Safety he would have added, but his voice faltered.'[168] Melmoth, in other words, offers liberty, but not snug safety, in true Satanic spirit. Since Immalee's return to Spain, she has not been allowed

beyond the garden, just like Victoria in *Zofloya*. The wanderer, her beloved, offers freedom from the confining and oppressive life in the paradisiacal garden of her deeply pious family. It is important to note that the garden is explicitly a symbol of confinement, rather than innocent joy, in both *Zofloya* and *Melmoth*. Escaping the garden—falling—can thus not be interpreted as a bad thing in itself, even if the means by which it is done in *Melmoth*, with help from a symbolic Satan, does not bode well for the future of the escapee. The ultimate consequences of this rebellious break-out are indeed quite horrid, as Immalee ends up imprisoned by the Inquisition for having married Melmoth and given birth to his child. And yet, one asks, would her life have been much happier had she obeyed the decrees of her family? The story's own logic seems to belie such a conclusion.

Maturin's novel was an economic success for its author, which quickly went into a second edition and was translated into both French and German within a year. It was not, however, a critical triumph.[169] In the *Quarterly Review*, J. W. Croker proclaimed that the book manages 'to unite … all the worst particularities of the modern novels' and 'unfortunately variegates its stupidity with some characteristics of a more disgusting kind, which our respect for good manners and decency obliges us to denounce'.[170] Croker also objected to Satan being the protagonist of the tale (for thus he interprets the figure of Melmoth), at least when the Devil was portrayed in this specific manner. Instead of a comical and entertaining figure, he felt, this Satan was 'brought forward in seriousness and sadness, surrounded by his scriptural attributes, and employed in ensnaring consciences and in propagating damnation', wherefore 'the matter becomes to solemn, too tremendous'. Hence, he goes on, '[T]his miserable mixture of the most awful truths with the most paltry fables, appears to us the work either of impiety or insanity, of a mind either very loose in it principles, or very wild in its operations.'[171] He further admonishes Maturin by reminding him that 'his fictitious being is the child of his own imagination, and that *he* is responsible for the scandal which every pious mind must feel at such idle and gratuitous profanation'.[172] In his preface to the novel, Maturin complains that he would not indulge in so unseemly an activity as the writing of romances if only the church had provided him with the means of subsistence.[173] Filled with indignation at this, Croker counters by stating that he is not surprised the church is

unwilling to support Maturin financially, given his earlier literary efforts—which he likens to the selling of poison.[174]

According to Niilo Idman, the only fully positive review of Melmoth came from *Blackwood's Magazine*, which opined that Maturin 'walks almost without a rival, dead or living, in many of the darkest, but, at the same time, the most majestic circles of romance'.[175] Several author colleagues, especially in France, also appreciated the novel. Baudelaire was so fascinated that he planned to do a new translation of the text into French to replace the incomplete one that had been published in 1821. Balzac, also a Maturin enthusiast, wrote a sequel to it, *Melmoth réconcilié* ('Melmoth Reconciled', 1835). Incidentally, Maturin was great-uncle to Oscar Wilde. When the latter travelled to Paris in 1897, after having served his prison sentence for gross indecency, he used the alias Sebastian Melmoth, reflecting the enduring fame of Melmoth as an outsider icon.[176] It seems reasonable to assume Melmoth's ambiguous relationship with Immalee—part liberator and initiator, part seducer and destroyer—would also have had a long-lasting impact on Maturin's wide readership, contributing subtly to the shift in views of Eve's collusion with Satan.

IMPROPER FEMALES AND SATANIC VAMPIRES

Having considered Maturin's immortal wanderer, we will now turn to a figure that is similarly deathless: the vampire, one of the more frequently encountered motifs in Gothic texts. As will be demonstrated, female vampires were often used in nineteenth-century literature as a metaphor for "improper" female behaviour, perhaps because a woman's supposed primary function was to nurture, and vampirism represents the absolute inversion of this. At times the function of vampire women as a symbol of everything their sex should not be was made quite explicit, as in Vernon Lee's 'A Frivolous Conversation' (1911), where a certain Count Kollonitz remarks 'I think women ought to be a kind of angels—and when they are not, why … You know how they used to treat vampires in my country—people who were corpses reanimated by devils and who sucked peoples' blood?'[177] Scholars in our own time have interpreted the figure as an allegorical representation of the New Woman, since the vampiress symbolized a threatening type of female who was independent, acted on her sexual desires, and rejected

motherhood. I will here analyse such themes as they are expressed in Théophile Gautier's short story 'La Morte amoureuse' (1836), Sheridan Le Fanu's short story 'Carmilla' (1872), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). In all three, becoming a vampire is described as a (female) escape route from the confines of patriarchal society. Whether or not the authorial voice believes women should be allowed to escape from it is, however, another matter. The vampire women are depicted as straightforwardly unholy and demonic creatures in these narratives, for instance, through parallels to traditional ideas about witches. In Stoker's novel, Dracula plays the part of Satan. His female cohorts thus become the equivalents of members of a witch-cult, inverting the rules of society. While Gautier is explicitly sympathetic towards his vampire and dismissive of the patriarchal Catholic Church, Le Fanu and Stoker do not praise the "improper" female monsters at all, nor do they show any sympathy for the Devil.

There is an old tradition of viewing vampirism as almost synonymous with Satanism (as will be discussed further on, this applies to some extent to lycanthropy as well). Such notions were propounded in several learned treatises, written mainly by men of the cloth. For example, the *Malleus Maleficarum* describes a witch who becomes a vampire-like creature after her death. Finally putting belief in the undead to rest is usually credited to Enlightenment thinkers like Diderot and Voltaire, along with the Catholic Church—a 1744 treatise commissioned by the pope concluded that vampires were products of over-active imaginations.[178] Only a few years after the Catholic Church had denied its existence, the vampire became a literary motif. Eventually, literary giants like Robert Southey (in *Thalaba the Destroyer*, 1797), Lord Byron ('The Giaour', 1813) and Baudelaire (two of his poems in *Les Fleurs du mal*, 1857) made use of it and spread its fame.[179] J. Gordon Melton, the well-known scholar of new religions who also happens to be an expert in vampires, has claimed that vampire fiction prior to Stoker was predominantly secular.[180] This is not fully correct. As will soon become clear, Gautier's short story has religion as its central concern, and even Le Fanu makes it a fairly important theme.

LIFE-DENYING CHRISTIANITY IN GAUTIER'S 'LA MORTE AMOUREUSE'

'La Morte amoureuse', written in 1836 by the French Romantic Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), is an early classic of the vampire genre. The author

had often declared his distaste for the church using fictional characters as his mouthpiece, in passages like the following from his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835):

> I have never gone to pick the flowers of the Passion on Golgotha, and the deep river flowing from the side of the crucified, creating a red belt in the world, has not washed me in its stream; —my rebellious body does not wish to acknowledge the supremacy of the soul, and my flesh does not agree to be mortified.[181]

Gautier's notorious scepticism towards Christianity and his celebrations of epicurean pleasures would have been likely to steer those readers familiar with his opinions (expressed in several other texts) to conceive of his sensuous female vampire as a heroine, and the representatives of Catholic morality as villains.[182] Such a view of the tale is, in fact, quite logical and obvious even without the extratextual support.

The protagonist of the story is the young novice priest Romuald. During his ordination ceremony, he locks eyes with a woman as beautiful as an angel. But is this really a heavenly creature? The young priest-to-be is uncertain if the fire in her eyes stems from Heaven or Hell, and if she is an angel or a devil. Her glances seem to tell him:

> If you will be mine, I shall make you happier than God Himself in His paradise; the angels will envy you. Tear asunder that funeral shroud in which you are about to wrap yourself; I am beauty, I am youth, I am life. … What could Jehovah offer you for compensation? … for I love you and would take you away from your God, before whom so many noble hearts pour forth floods of love which do not reach him.[183]

Tempting as this sounds, Romuald still cannot stop himself from saying 'yes' instead of 'no' when he is initiated into the priestly caste. It is as though an unknown force is compelling him to say what is expected of him, instead of what he truly wants to say. Here he draws a parallel that makes it possible to read the entire story as an allegorical criticism of how societal and religious structures force women to go against their own wishes: 'Perhaps it is that which makes so many young girls walk to the altar firmly resolved to refuse in a startling manner the husband imposed upon them, and that yet not one ever fulfils her intention.'[184]

Romuald is horrified that he has now become a priest, which means 'to be chaste, to never love … to turn away from all beauty, to put out one's eyes.'[185] The beautiful woman is later revealed to be the courtesan Clarimonde, who on her deathbed calls Romuald to her. A kiss they exchange

there binds them together, and after her demise she returns as a vampire and they become lovers. Their relationship—in which Clarimonde is clearly the dominant party—makes Romuald very happy, and he does not mind at all sharing some of his blood with her. In his liaison with the vampire, he takes on the role of a nobleman, a *seigneur* in French, something that is juxtaposed with his denial of God, *le Seigneur* ('the Lord'). To emphasize this, the two designations are even used in the same sentence at one time. As Joseph Andriano comments: 'Once the Lord is denied, Romuald thinks he has become his own lord.'[186] Romuald's mentor, the elderly Abbé Sérapion, is anything but pleased once he finds out what his protégée has been up to, and he exhumes Clarimonde's corpse and destroys the vampire using holy water. In her final words to her lover, she asks: 'Why did you listen to that imbecile priest? Were you not happy?'[187]

Abbé Sérapion is not portrayed in a very sympathetic way. His inquisitory manner makes Romuald feel hostility towards him, and scholars have often viewed the Abbé as the antagonist of the tale.[188] When he opens the vampire's grave, his grim zeal is described as lending him the air 'of a demon rather than of an apostle or an angel', and Romuald perceives his actions as 'an abominable sacrilege'.[189] Sérapion declares his belief that Clarimonde is 'Beelzebub himself'.[190] The choice of this particular name—certainly not among the most common choices—for designating Satan disguised as a woman further emphasizes something that is indicated in the very title of the short story: the fact that Gautier draws inspiration from Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*. Cazotte's oddly sympathetic female Satan asks her human lover to say to her tenderly 'My beloved Beelzebub, I adore you'.[191] In *Le Diable amoureux*, Christian moralism gets the last word and the pleasures of the flesh are condemned in a stern monologue uttered by a doctor of theology. Gautier lets his hero end the narrative by lamenting his rejection of earthly love.[192] In 'La Morte amoureuse' the demonic woman stands for freedom, the flesh, and enjoyment—in contrast to what Gautier seems to have perceived as the confining and life-hating attitude of Christianity, represented by a severe patriarchal figure. Gautier's alliance with an apparently unholy (she is destroyed by holy water) vampire woman, who rejects the value systems of Christianity and patriarchy, thus becomes a celebration of the liberating Satanic force, which is here—as in Cazotte's work—coded as feminine.[193]

In Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872), the lesbian vampire who gives her name to the story infiltrates the household of a noble family.[194] Laura, the daughter of the family, is charmed by the visitor, if somewhat ambivalent to her (quite obviously) homosexual advances. In her analysis of a cinematic adaptation of the tale, cinema scholar Barbara Creed claims that the horrific thing about Carmilla is not only the fact that she turns her victims into undead creatures of the night but also that she 'threatens to seduce the daughters of patriarchy away from their proper gender roles'.[195] The combination vampire and lesbian is, according to Creed, 'a happy one, since both figures are represented in popular culture as sexually aggressive women'.[196] I find this reading plausible and will here take a similar approach to the literary model. However, as will be seen, this does not mean that the text sides with the vampire in any way.

Carmilla is not only an adversary of patriarchy in general, but more specifically of Christian patriarchy. Like most vampires, she has a strong aversion towards Christianity. When she hears psalms being sung, she brusquely remarks 'Don't you perceive how discordant that is?', and she avoids the prayer sessions of her host family.[197] When the family friend General Spielsdorf turns up, having earlier lost his daughter to Carmilla, he takes a religious view of events, asking why 'Heaven should tolerate so monstrous an indulgence of the lusts and malignity of hell'.[198] The story ends with Spielsdorf, Laura's nobleman father, a priest, a commissioner, and two doctors digging up Carmilla's body from her grave and then decapitating her and driving a stake through her heart. All the main representatives of patriarchy are present to eradicate the threatening female demon, as the nobleman father combines forces with a military father and the representatives of church, state, and the medical profession.[199] The disruptive and demonic Carmilla is a female force, which, much like Clarimonde, represents the antithesis of "proper" passive femininity as well as the masculine righteousness of Christianity. Therefore, it takes pious and stoic men to defeat this force.

Several female scholars have perceived Le Fanu's vampire as something more complex than simply a horrid monster. For instance, Gina Wisker argues that Carmilla is a threatening figure for male readers, 'but less so, perhaps, for women'.[200] Carol A. Senf points out that Laura's life seems

characterized by confinement and a longing for passion and excitement.[201] Perhaps the longing Senf identifies is a good starting point to understand what Carmilla tells Laura about death in an enigmatic dialogue. She explains to her that girls 'are caterpillars while they live in the world, to be finally butterflies when the summer comes'. Summer here probably signifies the death that leads to a liberated existence as a vampire, where women are no longer subject to domestic confinement in their family.[202] At least this would be the way the vampire sees things. The forces of good in the story, and—rather obviously—its author, of course view things very differently. There is perhaps a parallel here to the domestic confinement of earlier Gothic heroines like Immalee in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, though the supposed liberator is more clearly evil in the case of Carmilla.

At the beginning of the tale, we are told that the text that follows is taken from the papers left behind by Laura, who is now dead. On the last page, she writes that her vampire friend has not entirely left her side, in spite of the measures taken by her male protectors, and she often fancies hearing 'the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door'.[203] Perhaps it was, after all, the Luciferian lesbian who took her life, or, if one takes such a view of things, who set her free from her drab existence, shackled by the bonds of patriarchy, and led her into something more full and free. However, there are no expressions of approval of the vampire in the text itself to support such a reading. Thus, claims like William Veeder's that the tale calls 'into question literary and social conventions and the moral orthodoxies underlying them' are unconvincing.[204] While she is portrayed as a revolutionary, demonic figure, no 'sympathy for the Devil' is displayed. That sympathy would have to be something for the reader to bring to the table, as the tale, in spite of being narrated by Laura, is told quite unambiguously from the hegemonic perspective of the Christian-patriarchal order. Le Fanu himself, we can note, was a devoted Tory, a member of groups like the Irish Metropolitan Conservative Society, and a public speaker arguing vigorously for such causes.[205] At one point in his career, he was even described as 'the literary leader of the young Conservatives'.[206] To make 'Carmilla' a celebration of the demonic feminine as a liberating force therefore seems far-fetched also from a biographical perspective.

Although ‘La Morte amoureuse’ and ‘Carmilla’ are undisputed classics of vampire fiction, the most popular story ever of this kind is without any competition Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). It has been so popular, in fact, that it has been claimed that only the Bible has been more broadly disseminated worldwide (I thus here assume that the plot is so well known to all that I need not recapitulate its broad strokes).[207] This may be slightly exaggerated, but that the novel has become something more than a mere literary text over time is beyond question. James B. Twitchell writes that Stoker’s novel is ‘the work of literature that takes the vampire out of fiction and returns him to folklore’.[208] David Punter, who is usually wary of labelling things ‘myths’, says that *Dracula* has achieved this rare (for a literary text) status.[209] It has further been called ‘the most religiously saturated popular novel of its time’, which brings it close to a myth in a more narrow sense as well.[210] The book was successful on its first publication and received very good reviews, but it was not a major bestseller and did not make Stoker rich. It was popular enough to remain constantly in print, however, and has thus been a persistent presence in Western culture from its initial appearance.[211] I would propose that it could be seen as a sort of (more or less) secular popular cultural perpetuation of time-honoured Christian themes and motifs relating to sinful women in league with Satan. In this capacity, it contributed significantly to keeping these notions alive and prevalent even outside religious quarters.

Dracula is often read as a reflection of various contemporary anxieties, and supposedly ‘part of the novel’s task was to represent, externalize, and kill off a distinct constellation of contemporary fears’.[212] That Stoker himself had some sort of didactic purpose when he wrote it is evidenced by a statement he made in an interview with the *British Weekly* in July 1897: ‘I suppose that every book of the kind must contain some lesson’, but, he added, ‘I prefer that readers should find it out for themselves.’[213] Intense speculation about wherein this lesson consists has taken place since at least the early 1970s. When it comes to the depiction of headstrong bloodsucking females in *Dracula*, two very different views have emerged in the debate. Salli J. Kline and others have argued—very convincingly and with a firm basis in biographical data—that Stoker’s vampire women are a malicious portrait of nineteenth-century feminists. This depiction is contrasted with “proper” women in the narrative, who are subserviently acting out their designated

role as ‘angel of the house’. The other position, championed by among others Carol A. Senf and Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, celebrates Stoker himself as a dedicated feminist. To Senf, his female vampires are ‘a feminist response to women who were only ornamental and useless parasites’.[214] Stoker, she claims, undermines ‘traditional assumptions about the relationship between the sexes’ as well as ‘accepted cultural beliefs about the role women should play within society’.[215]

Regardless of whether they are portrayed in a manner intended to be praiseworthy, Stoker’s female vampires could be considered “Satanists”, disciples of Satan, due to their relationship with the novel’s demonic title character. Dracula is not explicitly the Devil in disguise, but he displays numerous analogous traits and has a very similar function, much like Melmoth in Maturin’s eponymous novel. The alias he uses in London, Count de Ville, indicates the diabolical connection, as does his own name (Dracula being a diminutive form of the Romanian word for dragon or Devil).[216] There are also numerous instances in the novel where he is associated to or likened to Satan by other characters.[217] This further manifests itself on a structural level, where Dracula seemingly inverts numerous attributes of Christ.[218] Moreover, his physical appearance borrows freely from traditional representations of the Prince of Darkness.[219] In the Gothic genre, it is a time-honoured convention to give anti-heroes traits borrowed from Milton’s Satan, and such can be found in Dracula as well.[220]This may potentially have stimulated a reader-response to the character informed by the Romantics’ reception of the Miltonic Lucifer and ambiguous Gothic hero-villains like Melmoth, though such a suggestion must remain on the level of conjecture, and I have found no indications in contemporary sources of sympathy for Dracula.

Parallels to the figure of the demon lover should also be obvious. As seen in chapter 2, Satan was often portrayed as a highly sexual creature, and the witches’ sabbath as a sort of erotic orgy. Likewise, Dracula is a far more libidinous character than any of the human males. When the vampire hunters render his various hideouts useless for him with the help of holy water and Eucharistic wafers, they tellingly talk of how they “sterilize” his lairs. This is similar to how representatives of the church neutralize the Satanic sexuality represented by Clarimonde in ‘La Morte amoureuse’ and the lesbian vampire in ‘Carmilla’.

WICKED WITCHES, LUCY THE LUCIFERIAN FREETHINKER, AND MINA THE PROPER WOMAN

In the scene where Jonathan Harker encounters Dracula's three brides, the standard reading is to highlight a reversal of gender roles. Jonathan becomes passive, quietly waiting to be penetrated by the sharp teeth of the sexually aggressive women.[221] Carol A. Senf is of the opinion that the vampire ladies are so-called "new women", since these were often associated in the public mind with topsy-turvy sexual roles.[222] The awaited penetration by the fangs of the females never comes, however, since the Count himself interferes and offers the ladies a sack containing a child to devour instead.[223] Dracula's castle here emerges as a sort of Brocken or Blocksberg, the demonic and strange place where Satan would hold feasts for his witches and have sexual intercourse with them. These gatherings would typically involve the inversion of societal norms (comparable to how the ladies here take on what is coded as a masculine role) and cannibalistic orgies where babies were consumed. The hostility of vampire ladies and witches towards children probably signifies that they are both constructed as the very antithesis of "proper" women, whose role it would be to nurture and care for the young ones. Jonathan later writes of Dracula's brides: 'Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the pit!'[224] He escapes from the castle to a convent, and the care-giving nuns there constitute the ultimate contrast to the highly sexual but child-hating vampire women. The convent is also the site of his marriage to Mina, underscoring that she, unlike her friend Lucy, is a chaste and proper woman with no sexual desires.

Dracula later adds Lucy to his coven of witches. She is something of a dissenter from the start, whose name—etymologically linked to Lucifer—could be an indication of her rebellious nature.[225] For instance, after having received three marriage proposals in one day, she writes to her confidante Mina: 'Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it.'[226] Later, bedridden after her encounters with Dracula, she becomes a demonic sexual temptress and asks her fiancée Arthur to kiss her. The medical man and metaphysician Van Helsing violently stops him from fulfilling her request and acts as a guardian of morality keeping sensual urges at bay, much like Abbé Sérapion in 'La Morte amoureuse'.[227] Dracula has a function similar to

Clarimonde's. Accordingly, Charles S. Blinderman highlights his potential role as a liberator offering

> the power of pleasure, eternal carnal fun, here and now—not as in Christian eschatology, spiritual integration later and somewhere unmapped. In the kingdom of heaven which the Count endeavours to establish there are no disembodied souls strumming on harps, but rather fleshy beings whose business is pleasure.[228]

Stoker's text, however, does little to encourage such a potentially appealing understanding of what Dracula furnishes his acolytes. Unlike Gautier, Stoker is not a pro-sensual or subversive author, and one would have to manhandle the text rather roughly to extract such a meaning from it.

After her death, Lucy becomes a vampire and starts attacking children, which makes her witch-like in the same manner as Dracula's three brides in the castle. Demetrakopoulos speculates on this issue: 'Overburdened by motherhood, women readers might I believe, have found in these episodes a release for latent hostilities toward their "duties" and roles as mothers.'[229] The outright evil deeds of Lucy are thus, in an utterly unconvincing way, transformed into symbolic release from patriarchal pressures. If we accept that Stoker was making metaphorical points about feminist issues, *Dracula* is in fact a rather clear example of Demonized feminism where demonic motifs are used to slander women's struggle for autonomy.

Lucy's career of evil comes to a brutal end when the male heroes of the novel corner the undead creature in her crypt, where they cut off her head and drive a stake through her heart. Van Helsing tells Arthur to 'strike in God's name', and during the gruesome deed the men around him constantly pray. Afterwards, Dr Seward writes in his diary about the creature's 'carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity'.[230]Just like in Gautier's tale, Christianity and the power of God hold the cure to get rid of wicked and carnal females. The scene also parallels the climax of 'Carmilla', as representatives of different types of male authority —here a professor of medicine (and various unspecified disciplines in the humanities) wielding consecrated hosts, a psychiatrist, an English nobleman, and an American cowboy—cooperate to purge the earth of the demonic feminine.

In sharp contrast to Lucy, Mina is singled out by Van Helsing as 'one of God's women'.[231] Yet, even she comes under the threat of becoming a vampire. In an encounter with Dracula, Mina is forced to drink from a wound

he opens in his chest.[232] This bizarre breastfeeding is yet another of the transgressions of gender boundaries that seem to be typical of vampires. It also resounds with the hermaphroditic Satan (often depicted with breasts) familiar from Christian iconography, and with Éliphas Lévi's famous 1855 engraving of Baphomet. The obscene kiss in an altogether inappropriate and unclean spot (a wound) that Dracula forces Mina to give him could also be considered analogous with the witches' supposed display of allegiance by kissing the Devil's anus. The mark on her forehead that Mina gets from a Eucharistic wafer has parallels with the mark Satan was considered to put on his followers (in many accounts on their forehead), and with the 'mark of the beast' mentioned in Revelation 14:9–10.[233] Van Helsing calls what has happened 'the Vampire's baptism of blood', making one think, perhaps, of the Devil's supposed baptism of his adherents.[234]

In the novel's climax, Van Helsing protects Mina from Dracula's brides by placing her in a circle of Eucharistic wafers, 'which she could not leave no more than they could enter'.[235] This circle distinctly marks the boundary between proper and improper females. The brides cry out to her: 'Come, sister. Come to us. Come! Come!'[236] Kline argues that these siren calls would have reminded contemporary readers of how suffragettes held public meetings and tried to persuade housewives in the crowd to join their cause.[237] Mina's utter horror at the attempts of the vampire brides to lure her from the protective circle would then show that she is still bound by the rules of patriarchy, which she has internalized entirely, and that she can be successfully reintegrated into society again, unlike her friend Lucy. I am not sure a specific allegorical signification like this—the vampires outside the circle as feminist agitators—would have been obvious to that many contemporary readers, but in a more vague sense the vampires would at least have been perceived as representatives of everything a good Victorian woman should not be: sexual, dominant, unmotherly. We should keep in mind here, however, that many feminists at the time certainly emphasized the nobility of motherhood and held the same strict sexual ideals as the rest of society, if not even stricter. Their adversaries were fond of painting them in colours close to those of Stoker's bloodthirsty female transgressors.

Stoker's novel, then, depicts something with strong similarities to witchcraft and Satanism, and makes what can be taken as metaphorical points about the feminism of the day. Whether or not *Dracula* is also a pro-feminist and/or pro-Satanic work is another matter entirely, and I agree with those who read it in the contrary manner. Nevertheless, it should now be clear that *Dracula* in a way connects (a caricature of) feminism with Satanism. Moreover, in all the three vampire tales I have discussed here, the vampires are either female (Gautier and Le Fanu) or mostly female: four out of the five vampires in Stoker's text are women, and the Count himself is apparently concerned exclusively with women. He never transforms a male into a vampire, though he would have had ample opportunity to do so with both Jonathan Harker and Renfield, but he attempts to add Lucy and Mina to his coven, and already has three female companions in his castle. Further, he is depicted as feminine to some extent, as when he nurses Mina at his breast.

The vampires in each of the three narratives are hostile towards Christianity, and the representatives of church and patriarchy view them as more or less explicitly in league with Satan. Gautier's and Stoker's vampires also absorb traits from Satan, and Dracula's relationship to women echoes that of the Devil to witches. It thus seems fair to say that the vampires constitute a Satanic feminine alternative to patriarchal Christianity. At least in Stoker and Le Fanu, this alternative is not portrayed in a positive or even undecided manner. Considering the texts as parts of a larger Gothic corpus, where a rather ambivalent attitude towards villains is often present, would, however, make it slightly more plausible to interpret the vampires as morally ambiguous or even appealing in their transgressiveness. Some nineteenth-century readers may have approached them with these genre conventions in mind.

This, however, is probably not the reason why several present-day feminist scholars have made heroes and heroines of vampires. As I mentioned in chapter 1, these academics should be seen as contributors to a latter-day version of the discourse of Satanic feminism. Some examples have already been provided in the discussion, but there are many more. For instance, Nina Auerbach perceives, in her research and apparently also in her private life, the vampire as 'a secret talisman against a nice girl's life'. She continues: 'Vampires were supposed to menace women, but to me at least, they promised protection against a destiny of girdles, spike heels, and approval.' Auerbach has even explained that she wrote her widely acclaimed

book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995) partly in order to 'reclaim them [the vampires] for a female tradition, one that has not always known its own allies'.[238] In an earlier book, she claimed that Dracula's greatest power was his ability to 'catalyze the awesome changes dormant in womanhood'.[239] Carol A. Senf takes a similar view and considers Dracula a liberator, 'a missionary of desire whose true kingdom will be the human body', who relies on women's 'desire to emulate his freedom from external constraints'.[240]

These ideas are not unique today. The vampire myth in popular culture has now evolved to a point where the vampires are heroes almost as often as they are villains.[241] This is part of a broader cultural tendency to make heroes of monsters, and a far-reaching fascination with anti-heroes.[242] While this is interesting in its own right, the resulting counter-readings are of little use if one is interested primarily in what, for instance, Stoker's own intentions were, or how his contemporaries would likely have understood *Dracula*. Openly revisionist subversive present-day readings could then justifiably be called superficial and careless, as Kline describes Demetrakopoulos's interpretation.[243] To make heroes of Carmilla and the vampires in *Dracula* one has to carry out counter-readings that interpret the literary texts in a way contrary to their surface meaning as well as the authorial intent and historical context. It seems probable that Gautier intended his female vampire to come across as a positive contrast to what he perceived as the stifling morality of the patriarchal Catholic Church (a view he expressed in several of his works). Le Fanu and Stoker in all likelihood had the opposite intention and used female vampires as a symbol of precisely what a woman should not be.

Was it, then, only with the advent of the 1960s counterculture and the rise of academic feminism that these Satanic feminist readings of the vampire arose? Or had there been women earlier who appropriated the figure as a role model? Bram Dijkstra claims that women in the age when *Dracula* was written also found these demonic females appealing as paragons of independence: 'Attracted by the apparent sense of power imputed to the female vampire by turn-of-the-century culture, women of the period often cultivated the anorexic look of that predator.' However, he only supplies one example of such a vampire wannabe, actress Ida Rubinstein (1885–1960), and it might be a bit far-fetched to conclude, from the mere fact that she was

once painted (in *Le Trajet*, 'The Crossing', ca. 1900–1911) by Romaine Brooks (1874–1970) as vaguely vampire-like, that Rubinstein's goal was 'to become as much like the period's archetypal vampire creature as she possibly could'. Nonetheless, the basic idea itself, that of a 'cult of the vampire' which Dijkstra argues 'had come to influence women's conception of themselves', is interesting and should be researched further.[244] My final example in this chapter will demonstrate that there were definitely women, at least a couple of decades after Stoker wrote his novel, who approached female supernatural monsters as symbols of liberation and empowerment, albeit with an awareness of the potentially tragic consequences of breaking free when patriarchy responded violently.

'BLISSFUL FREEDOM': THE WEREWOLF WOMAN OF AINO KALLAS'S *SUDENMORSIAN*

Finnish author Aino Kallas's (1878–1956) werewolf novella *Sudenmorsian* ('The Wolf's Bride', 1928, translated into English in 1930) fits in very well with the varieties of female empowerment with help from Satan that we have thus far encountered in Gothic literature. Yet, in many ways this tale is quite different from most of its predecessors. First, like *Zofloya*, it is written by a woman. Secondly, we know that the author had some feminist ideas and interpreting the tale as a positive depiction of women's emancipation is therefore not very far-fetched even if one adheres to a strictly biographical perspective. This is also strongly borne out by the text itself, where a considerable enthusiasm for women breaking free—with assistance from the Devil!—is quite evident.

Aino Kallas, *née* Krohn, was the daughter of the influential Finnish folklorist and Fennicist (among other things) Julius Krohn, and one of her brothers was Karlee Krohn, also a respected name in the former field. In the year 1900, when Aino was twenty-two, yet another folklorist, the Estonian Oskar Kallas, appeared in her life, and they soon married. Her husband was a vicar's son and highly conservative in his opinions on family life and women, basing them on the old Baltic German 'three K's for women': *Kirche, Kinder, Küche* ('Church, Children, Kitchen'). Aino, well educated, headstrong, and ambitious, was at the time of her marriage already an established writer, having made her literary debut in 1897 with a collection of poems. It is hardly unexpected that their marriage would be a troubled one at times. They had five children, four of whom survived. Oskar went on to

have a career as a diplomat, and the couple thus moved in international upper-class circles. When Aino wrote *Sudenmorsian*, they lived in London, where Oskar was the Estonian ambassador, 1922–34. His wife associated with the city's literary figures, and her own works (which she wrote in Finnish, but several of which were translated into English), among them *Sudenmorsian*, were well received by British critics.[245] This was the high point of her career, when she was the most widely translated and internationally famous Finnish author after Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884). As a glamorous and intellectually gifted diplomat wife, 'Madame Kallas' became a frequently mentioned figure in British society columns (figure 5.4). When not working hard with active networking on behalf of Estonia, she embarked on lecture tours throughout England and the United States. Her lectures generally focused on introducing Estonia (though some of them revolved around women questions) and ended with the recitation of one or another of her short stories.[246]

Such recitations were fitting conclusions to her lectures, since Kallas wrote a number of tales directly inspired by Estonian history and folklore. She typically uses an archaic style to give them a flavour of the time period, and they are often peppered with biblical allusions and paraphrases. Resistance against the rules of patriarchy is a recurring theme, with women demanding the right to love as they will and revolting against their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In several of the works, this also entails an explicit repudiation or challenging of Christianity. As part of her preparations for these works, Kallas carefully studied Estonian historical chronicles and folklore material (including, in the case of *Sudenmorsian*, all the unpublished primary sources on Estonian werewolf beliefs available at the time). Even so, she did not harbour particularly strong nationalist sentiments, neither towards Estonia nor Finland. Quite the opposite, in fact, and this incurred some animosity from her husband's countrymen. This irritation partly revolved around her portraits of unconventional, rebellious women, at odds with the idealized nationalistic 'good mother'.[247]

FIGURE 5.4 Aino Kallas (1878–1956), author of the Satanic feminist novella *Sudenmorsian* (1928). Photo courtesy of the Estonian Cultural History Archives, Estonian Literary Museum.

Sudenmorsian is set in seventeenth-century Estonia, which was at the time under Swedish rule. Young Aalo marries the forester Priidik, and they have a girl. Priidik has been attracted to his wife because of her gentle and seemingly submissive manner, but has also from the start been aware of a Devil's mark on her body (a mole under her breast), a sign of dormant deviance. She eventually heeds the call of Satan (who is at times also called the Forest Daemon), and at night she transforms into a werewolf and runs with a wolf pack. When her husband discovers this, he casts her out. One

night she returns and becomes pregnant by him again. When she reappears to give birth to the child, the villagers burn her alive in the birthing hut (sauna). This kills the child, but not the mother, who is instead trapped in her wolf shape. The novel ends with Priidik shooting Aalo to death with a bullet made from his silver wedding ring, a symbolic ending if ever there was one: the token of marriage is used to slay the woman rebelling against patriarchy's demands.

As werewolf specialist Cynthia Jones has pointed out, Priidik objectifies Aalo from the first moment he sees her, in a scene where—without her being aware of it—he watches her wash sheep in the water. He immediately fantasizes about what a diligent and sweet wife she would make. Jones highlights how he consistently projects his own traditional feminine ideal onto Aalo, without stopping for a second to think of what would make her happy.[248] There are indications early on that the 'three K's for women' so dear to Kallas's own husband are not enough to satisfy Aalo. She longs for a freedom that is forbidden to females. Before becoming a werewolf, Aalo, upon hearing the howling of wolves in the forest, 'would forget her tasks and fall to gazing from the threshold of her home towards the wilds'.[249] As Kukku Melkas elucidates, '[t]he threshold . . . marks a borderline between the restricted and regulated area and the wilderness, where there are no boundaries'.[250] When she eventually heads out into this 'lawless' domain and becomes a werewolf, 'neither the crowing of the cocks, nor the barking of the watchdogs could be heard from the village, nor on Sundays the sound of church bells'.[251] The village's as well as Christianity's rules concerning women are thus nullified in this environment. Once outside the fenced-in garden around her house, Aalo can run free.

We can here think of Eve's act of rebellion leading to her expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and of women's escapes from constricting Edenic gardens in Gothic novels like *Zofloya* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The parallel to Eve is in fact made explicit in the description of the clearly Satanic initiation given to Aalo through her metamorphosis:

> And in herself and in the world around her she felt a deep change, and all things were strange and new, as though she now saw them for the first time with her bodily eyes; like to our first mother Eve, when at the snake's bidding she ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Paradise.[252]

Kallas here expressly inscribes herself in a tradition of Satanic feminism. Yet, she concurrently problematizes the gifts Satan can bring a woman:

Aalo's ultimate desire is to run wild, but without giving up her role as a dutiful wife who takes care of home and children. She wants to have both things at once—both the gentle pleasures of submission to her husband and societal norms, and the animal enjoyment of liberty in the forest. Ulla-Maija Juutila draws attention to that 'Aino Kallas has wild and powerful visions of a holistic womanhood, but this womanhood can not be realized'.[253] There is seemingly no redemption in synthesis to be found in Kallas's fictional universe, and attempting to be both the wild woman freed by Satan and the good housewife of Christian society is doomed to fail. Had Aalo chosen one or the other, she would perhaps have stood a chance to attain happiness. Since she is described as being marked by Satan from the very beginning, it would seem that the logical choice—the only choice, really—for her would have been to give up domestic life and fully embrace her wolf side. This, after all, is the aspect of herself that brings her a joy unequalled by anything in her human life: 'never, in all her human days had her blood bubbled with such a golden exultation and such a blissful freedom as now'.[254] Given wordings like this, it is difficult not to read what Satan bestows upon her as a precious gift, and far from a curse, even if it has a double-edged dimension. *Freedom* is the key term in what the Devil brings, and freedom is always a demanding thing.

Kallas was familiar with Gautier's works, and there are obvious correlations here to Romuald's double life in 'La Morte amoureuse', where he is a priest during day and an extravagant nobleman revelling in carnal pleasures during night.[255] But where the woman symbolizing the latter way of life is an externalized 'threat' (or rescue, depending on one's view of the values she represents) in Gautier's story, and the protagonist can therefore (to his life-long sorrow) be returned to his dull life of duty when she is killed, Kallas's protagonist herself is this wild woman. Since the wildness and longing for freedom is part of her, and not symbolized by a female "other", the heroine must be put to death in order for patriarchal Christian society's rules to continue holding sway. As in Gautier's tale, this is not portrayed as a particularly happy outcome (certainly not, at least, for the woman in question). To make another vampire comparison, we can note again that in *Dracula* Lucy and the other female vampires do something that marks them out as completely evil women: they attack children, just like witch hunters imagined that witches do. Aalo never does anything evil like this, but she still leaves her firstborn behind to run with the wolves, and it is

later described how the influence of Satan makes her forget 'husband, child' and 'even the word of God'.[256] This rejection of motherhood, then, is connected to the Devil by both Stoker and Kallas.

'WOMEN ARE MORE DESIROUS OF BECOMING WEREWOLVES': LYCANTHROPIC INTERTEXTS

The bond between werewolves and the Prince of Darkness is not a novel invention on Kallas's part. Just like vampires, werewolves were commonly linked to Satan in European folklore and early modern learned treatises. There is also considerable overlap with the witch figure, and witches were sometimes believed to have the ability to change into wolves, bestowed upon them as a gift from their master Satan.[257] Several works of nineteenth-century fiction, for example, Alexandre Dumas's *Le Meneur de loups* ('The Wolf-leader', 1857), perpetuate this image of lycanthropy as the result of a deal with the Devil. Interestingly, the werewolf condition was used by the Decadent author Rachilde (Marguerite Eymery, 1860–1953) as an image of forbidden female urges. Rachilde believed she came from a family of (Satanic) werewolves, since her great-grandfather had supposedly turned into one after a conflict with the Catholic Church. The wolf and the lycanthrope therefore became important motifs in her texts. If we are to believe Melanie Hawthorne, 'the werewolf served to express what Rachilde perceived as the monstrosity of her desire to write'.[258]

An intriguing late Gothic, or high Decadent, example of a diabolical female werewolf can be found in Count Eric Stenbock's (we will return to this strange figure in chapter 7) 1893 short story 'The Other Side', which opens with a description of a Black Mass. Stenbock's werewolves are led by a Satan-like 'wolf-keeper', and one of his minions—a beautiful blonde girl—entices a young boy away from his life in a peaceful village. The wolf girl's name is later revealed to be Lilith, that of Adam's demonic first wife in Jewish folklore.[259] As described in chapter 2 of the present study, Lilith was established as a sort of feminist icon at the end of the nineteenth century. Giving the wolf girl this name could therefore signal an anti-patriarchal trait in the lycanthropes. After having crossed a stream to the other side of a brook—the side where the werewolves dwell—and picked a strange blue flower there (the blue flower of Romanticism, made famous by Novalis?), Stenbock's protagonist behaves strangely when serving at Mass. The priest

says 'Introibo ad altar Dei' ('I will go unto the altar of God'), and the boy gives the blasphemous answer 'Qui nequiquam laetificavit juventutem meam' ('Who denies me the joy of my youth').[260] This is quite similar to how the church is portrayed as denying life and earthly joys in Gautier's 'La Morte amoureuse' and illustrates a continuum between female vampires and werewolves as possible tools of cultural criticism.

In general, however, descriptions of female werewolves in other texts of the period immediately leading up to the publication of *Sudenmorsian* tend to be quite misogynist, just like most vampire tales. Elliot O'Donnel claimed in his 1912 monograph *Werewolves* that '[a]pparently women are more desirous of becoming werewolves than men, more women than men having acquired the property of werwolfery through their own act'.[261] This was emphatically not intended as a compliment. O'Donnel's claim hardly holds true if we look at European folklore and trial records, and should rather be taken as an expression of the anxieties concerning women typical of his time. Nineteenth-century literary descriptions of female werewolves tended to emphasize that they were, like vampire women, a sort of evil anti-mothers, and thus intensely hostile to children.[262] Werewolf folklore, in turn, has often had an oppressive function along clearly gendered lines, functioning as a sort of morality narrative teaching women to stay in place and not, for example, to venture forth alone outside the village.[263] What Kallas presents is thus also a counter-myth to the message of this type of folklore, that she was well versed in, and to the literary treatments of the motif. We should moreover consider her familiarity with the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which she had read in a German translation.[264] This made her highly knowledgeable about the most extreme type of Christian misogyny and its (literal) demonization of woman. I would suggest that reading Institoris and Sprenger's infamous tome likely influenced her decision to subvert these ideas by portraying Satan as a liberator in *Sudenmorsian*, in effect performing a feminist counter-reading of the concept of woman's intimate ties to the Devil.

Further, I would like to propose a more contemporary influence that might have prompted her in this direction. While living in London, Kallas became friends with many literary figures, among them the Bloomsbury group writer David Garnett (1892–1981), to whose father the English translation of *Sudenmorsian* is dedicated.[265] It is very interesting to note that another of Garnett's friends was Sylvia Townsend Warner (1803–1978).[266] In 1926,

Warner, to whom the entire twelfth chapter of the present study is devoted, published the novel *Lolly Willowes*, a highly explicit example of Satanic feminism. It seems extremely likely that Kallas would have read this book, as it was very much the talk of the town when it came out and has a theme in some ways strikingly close to that of *Sudenmorsian*. The fact that they both knew Garnett makes this influence on Kallas even more probable. I have not seen anyone else propose this connection, but I believe it could be significant, especially in relation to the notion of the Devil as the emancipator of woman that is present in both works. Perhaps the two female authors even met, since they had mutual friends, lived in London at the same time, and moved in the city's literary circles.[267]

'SHE WAS ONE WITH THE FOREST DAEMON': KALLAS AND THE NEW BRITISH FEMINISM

As is the case with Lucy in *Dracula*, a Satan figure gives Aalo the freedom to move about as she wishes during the night, something unthinkable for a well-behaved woman. But, as Jones explains, to Priidik such freedom—where his wife becomes a subject acting in accordance with her own will and ceases to be an object of her spouse—makes him draw the conclusion that 'then she cannot be allowed to exist' at all, as Jones puts it.[268] This is the same way the vampire hunters in *Dracula*, led by the stern Van Helsing, feel about Lucy, who has also started to roam freely in the night-time. Aalo is killed just like the transgressive vampire women in Gautier, Le Fanu, and Stoker's texts, all of them destroyed by representatives of male domination. Like the vampires, Aalo acts in contradiction to how a "good" woman should behave according to the rules of patriarchy. In addition, she is connected with the Devil from the very start, being destined to heed his call. This is comparable to the portrayal of Lucy in *Dracula*, with her early "heretical" ideas regarding polygamy. However, making a feminist reading of Lucy the vampire as a heroine puts considerable strain upon the text, since she is so obviously evil and utterly monstrous. She is also a minor character in the narrative. Not so with Aalo, who is never guilty of significant villainy and is the protagonist of the tale. Clearly, much had happened in terms of the position of women during the thirty-one years separating the two texts.

Kallas began work on *Sudenmorsian* while travelling to her native country of Finland, where women got the vote as early as 1906. The women in

Estonia, her husband's home country, were enfranchised in 1917. Those in Stoker's (and the Kallas couple's) England achieved partial enfranchisement (where women over thirty could vote) the following year, and full voting privileges in 1928, the same year that *Sudenmorsian* was written. As we can understand from this, the context of Victorian England, where Stoker authored his admonishing lesson in appropriate femininity, and the Finland and England of 1928 were, of course, vastly different from one another. Even aside from the fact that she is a woman author, it is thus only to be expected that Kallas's text is not simply a continuation of conservative Gothic themes from the preceding century. Rather, it actively deconstructs and subverts several such now somewhat antiquated motifs. Still at this point, though, it may not have felt entirely feasible to depict a woman becoming completely free—with a little help from Satan—yet suffering no ill consequences. There was, in the real world, even now a high price to be paid for "complete" female emancipation. It also seems Kallas is ambivalent to some extent about such freedom, and the ending is as repressive as those of Stoker's and Le Fanu's stories. A major difference, however, is that the punishing and killing of the monstrous female comes across as a tragedy rather than as a triumphantly joyous occasion.

Kukku Melkas also emphasizes the specific gender context of the 1920s and brings up developments concerning women's right to education:

> By the 1920s the social situation had already changed, and women's issues no longer centred on the basic question of education. Women had secured both the right to vote and the right to a university education. The question was no longer one of simple access to knowledge, as had been the case at the turn of the century, but of the possibility of revising or rewriting that knowledge.[269]

While I agree that revising and rewriting (constructing a counter-discourse) is a central matter in *Sudenmorsian*, there are, as the other chapters of this study testify, numerous examples of this being essential to works by feminists several decades earlier as well, for example, the contributors to *The Woman's Bible*. However, the new situation for women probably meant it was easier for them to engage in such revisions of patriarchal narratives and norm systems. Thomas DuBois calls attention to how British feminists, when the final battle for suffrage was as good as won, had started to bring issues of women's identity and an embracing of sexuality on their own terms to the fore (that sexual satisfaction for women appeared on the agenda, of course, also had something to do with developments in the new discipline of

psychology). These types of feminist concerns are clearly reflected in *Sudenmorsian*.[270] It could perhaps be objected that these were not entirely new interests in the history of feminism, as seen, for example, in the close ties between free love activists and feminists several decades earlier, but DuBois's argument is still basically sound: their importance had at least increased. DuBois further mentions the fact that Kallas had personal contacts with feminists like Lady Nancy Astor (1879–1964), Britain's first female Member of Parliament, and was a member of organizations like the Women's Election Committee, the American Women's Club, and the International Council of Women. It is possible that she was introduced to feminist ideas in this context that she found appealing. This, DuBois suggests, could be a reason why the literary project that Kallas's *Sudenmorsian* is part of is 'resonant with the feminist thinkers of her day'.[271]

Let us look at some of the expressions in the novella of these resonances. As mentioned, Aalo at first tries to juggle her day-life as a dutiful wife and her night-life as a free-roaming wolf. Jones remarks that it is only after Priidik banishes her that she is unable to lead both lives simultaneously, which was seemingly her wish. Aalo still attempts to return to nurture her daughter, however, even though her husband has forbidden this. In Jones's opinion, this relates to twentieth-century women's struggle to balance the role of the mother-housewife and the working woman.[272] Ulla-Maija Juutila similarly suggests that the call of Satan is also an image of the attraction of fully devoting one's life to art that Kallas herself felt, which conflicted with conventional family life. Additional support for this reading can be found in Kallas's diaries, where *Daimon* is the word she uses to designate the call to be an artist (referring, of course, to the Greek term for genius or attendant spirit, but almost identical to the Latin-derived English *Daemon* designating Aalo's liberator Satan in the novella).[273] This seems a likely allegorical meaning, especially since Aalo the werewolf roams the forest, the same location where her husband the forester works but which is forbidden to women. Another possible aspect of Aalo's relation to Satan is erotic involvement, in which case we are dealing with a demon lover motif. This sexual dimension is never made explicit, but is hinted at when Aalo and Satan become one in a sort of *unio mystica*:

> And in this moment she was one with the Forest Daemon, the mighty daemon who in the form of a wolf, had chosen her and taken her into his power, and all boundaries between them fell away, and

> they melted each into the other, like two dew drops, and no one could have known which was which, or told the one from the other.[274]

Regardless of if we read this as a carnal union, sexual freedom for women (and how to balance this with being a mother) is a prominent theme. When Aalo first returns home after her banishment, Priidik is rendered passive and she is the sexually aggressive party, who makes love to him all night. Her husband is now made the object of desire, and she the subject, in a dramatic reversal of gender roles brought about with Satan's assistance.[275] The parallel here to the strong sexual drive and take-charge attitude in this matter in characters like Victoria in *Zofloya*, Matilda in *The Monk*, Biondetta in *Le Diable amoureux*, and Clarimonde in 'La Morte amoureuse' should be obvious. We can also think of how Dracula's brides make Jonathan Harker the docile object of their lust. This goes to show that there are echoes of earlier Gothic concerns in *Sudenmorsian*—but now valued very differently.

Kallas metaphorically expresses women's longing to be something more than mothers and nurturers in a variety of ways. For example, the narrator explains to us about Aalo: 'And of her own will she surrendered her spirit, soul and body, to the daemon, to be guided thereafter by him. Not even the plaint of her innocent child could hold her back, for she was deaf to all besides the call of the wolf.'[276] In biographical terms, this might be read in light of Kallas's tragic extramarital love affair with the famous Finnish poet Eino Leino (1878–1926), which had her feeling torn between her children and love.[277] Concern with her reputation, social standing, and financial security were also complicating factors in her desire for Leino. Although her husband was supportive of her writing, Kallas further sharply felt the conflict between wedded bliss (with its attendant duties) and self-realization as an author. How to achieve freedom as a woman is, in this sense, very much a central issue in her diaries, as Leena Kurvet-Käosaar has shown.[278] Still, it is, of course, not necessarily the case that Kallas focused solely on her personal problems when writing *Sudenmorsian*. She may also have been attempting to say something about women in general and their inner struggles. If Aalo is read as a symbol of all women, it is even more remarkable that she bears the Devil's mark from the start. This interlocks with the very old Christian misogynist tradition wherein woman, every woman, is portrayed as being particularly close to Satan, and more likely than men to fall prey to his

guiles. Here, however, it takes on a wholly new meaning, as Satan becomes a potential ally for females who want to break free from male domination.

From a narratological perspective, the story can be interpreted on several levels. At the very end of the text, we are told that what we have read is a record of a court hearing concerning the events. It has been dictated by a group of distinguished officials, on the basis of the testimonies of Priidik and the villagers.[279] DuBois therefore draws the conclusion that Aalo never was a werewolf at all, that there is no real evidence for the allegations and that the text represents a demonizing and subjective patriarchal account.[280] Our narrator is thus unreliable. This is certainly a convincing reading. However, it fails to account for the long, enthusiastic descriptions of what Satan has kindly bestowed upon Aalo. This may in a way be seen as a narratological blunder on Kallas's part, since the amount of details we are told about the protagonist's private emotions and experiences when interacting with the Devil would seem strange if the story were entirely based on what others have ascribed to her. These passages, where Aalo's inmost euphoric feelings of liberation are described, shine like subversive beacons in the patriarchal fog of the court record. Kallas's overall intention is clearly seditious, as she portrays Satan as an emancipator, Aalo as a noble albeit conflicted heroine, and her murderers as cruel, intolerant oppressors.

Melkas argues that Satan in *Sudenmorsian* is 'not a gendered or personified character'.[281] The figure therefore cannot be seen as a masculine force. Rather, it seems intimately tied up with a wild form of femininity, and Jones highlights that Satan acts specifically as the freer of woman and does nothing to liberate any males. In an almost rhetorical manner, Jones asks the question 'whether Satan has marked her [Aalo] to be cursed or liberated as a werewolf', and clearly she interprets the Devil as having set her free, elucidating that 'Satan is ultimately responsible for the conversion of Aalo from the object of Priidik to an independent subject', which seems a highly reasonable reading.[282] There is moreover fairly good support in biographical data for viewing Kallas as a feminist, or at the very least as a person concerned with dissecting traditional gender roles and pondering their usefulness, or lack thereof, in a modern world.[283] Looking at the analyses provided by Melkas, Jones, DuBois, and Juutila it seems fair to say that there exists something of a scholarly consensus that *Sudenmorsian* is a feminist work, and I fully concur with this apparently uncontroversial conclusion.[284]

More specifically, given the motifs employed, the novella is a clear example of Satanic feminism in literary guise. Kallas herself was aware of the radical implications of her stories, and in her 1920s diaries she ponders if it is perhaps because they are too 'revolutionary' that she has difficulties finding a publisher for them in the conservative English cultural climate.[285]

CONCLUDING WORDS

Le Diable amoureux, The Monk, Vathek, Zofloya, and *Melmoth* are all quite indecisive in their vaguely hinted sympathy for the Devil, and for the women empowered by allying themselves with him. While they are all to a varying degree open to such a reading, and do have some passages and general tendencies facilitating it, the texts themselves do not consistently lean heavily in this direction. Rather, it likely takes intertextual reverberations (from e.g. Romantic Satanism), or readers with rebellious inclinations, to bring out this potential. Gothic genre conventions pertaining to enthusiasm for anti-heroes would also probably have had such an influence. The appropriation of the Devil by radical political writers and Romantics, detailed in chapter 3, gives contextual support to Satan as a symbol of liberation in the Gothic novels as well. A reading of this kind was "in the air", so to speak, at the time when these novels were first published, and thus provides an often-neglected frame for understanding them. Whether the Gothic writers were, to once more quote Blake writing about Milton, 'of the Devil's party without knowing it', is perhaps beside the point. The interesting thing here is that the texts themselves so obviously open up this possibility of interpretation and are embedded in a cultural context that would have stimulated many contemporary readers to potentially view them as pro-Satanic and in favour of female emancipation—doubtless to the utter horror of conservative members of the audience and many of the authors themselves.

'La Morte amoureuse', in its siding with diabolical sensualism, is more unequivocally Satanically aligned than the first five texts analysed in this chapter, while 'Carmilla' and *Dracula* have their heels firmly planted on the side of Christian bourgeoisie moralism. *Dracula* probably even has an intentional anti-feminist subtext. Gautier, unlike Stoker and Le Fanu, was a figure who actively criticized and opposed the values of contemporary conformist righteousness. Even so, more power to women was hardly at the top of his agenda, and what he propagated was first and foremost an

affirmation of sensuality and earthly beauty. Any potential "feminism" present in his tale has more to do with these things being coded as feminine traits in opposition to the distinctly patriarchal church whose values he objected to. In Gautier's tale, as in Cazotte's, Satan is not so much a liberator of females as a feminine liberator of men. *Sudenmorsian* is quite close to 'La Morte amoureuse' in spirit in some ways, but the major difference is that the latter is written from the perspective of a female protagonist instead of a male one. Kallas's way of problematizing the competing urges to be a good mother and to be independent would possibly have been too outrageous in early nineteenth-century France and decidedly of less interest to a writer like Gautier. *Sudenmorsian*, therefore, is the only fully developed example of Satanic feminism in this chapter, made possible by changes in society but perhaps primarily owing to the "revolutionary" temperament of its author. It nevertheless clearly stands on the shoulders of the older Gothic texts and draws on their ambiguous treatments of this theme.

If we read *Sudenmorsian* as a Gothic text, as I think we should, it becomes clear that genre conventions play a part in making Aalo's rebellion doomed to fail. Just like in the case of heroines such as Victoria in *Zofloya*, there can be no hope of redemption—neither through successful breaking free from societal constraints, nor through forgiveness for attempting to do so—in a Gothic narrative. Neither God nor Satan can truly be of help, even if the latter is allowed to don the mantle of a benevolent emancipator in *Sudenmorsian*.

A constantly present intertext in these Gothic narratives is, as we have seen time and time again, Genesis 3. The Satan figures (literal or metaphorical) often offer self-deification, 'to become like God' in some sense, and eye-opening initiations. In my definition of the genre, I have underscored that the Fall, and the world as fallen, can be said to be a basic structural element of the works in question. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the serpent-tempter and a garden as the site of temptation are recurring motifs. But the Gothic authors tend to subvert the Eden narrative to some degree (but almost never fully), resulting in a certain ambivalence. Is what the serpent offers really wholly bad, or is the God-fearing and obedient alternative perhaps just as horrible, or even worse? Posing troubling questions like this is a central feature of Gothic literature, and, as this chapter has demonstrated, it is common to ask them through narratives depicting the liberation of woman with Satan's assistance.

[1] Lovecraft 2011, p. 19.

[2] Paglia 1990/2001, pp. 265, 267.

[3] Fyhr 2003, pp. 33–36.

[4] Quoted in ibid., p. 36.

[5] Ibid., p. 11. Although it became recognized as a genre at the end of the eighteenth century, it was also called a great many other things than Gothic, e.g. 'terrorist novel writing' and 'the terrible school' (Clery 1995, p. 148).

[6] See e.g. O'Malley 2006, p. 11.

[7] Sade 1961, p. 31: 'Pour qui connaissait tous les malheurs dont les méchants peuvent accabler les hommes, le roman devenait aussi difficile à faire, que monotone à lire … il fallait donc appeler l'enfer à son secours, pour se composer des titres à l'intérêt.'

[8] Lévy 1974, pp. 151–152.

[9] Tellier 1982, p. 2.

[10] Varnado 1974. Cf. Price 1992.

[11] Hume 1969 (esp. p. 290). See also his discussion with Robert L. Platzner on this issue: Hume & Platzner 1971; Hume 1974.

[12] Hume 1969, p. 285; Hume & Platzner 1971, p. 268.

[13] Hume 1969, p. 289. According to Hume, the Romantic 'assumes the ultimate existence, if not the ultimate accessibility, of clear answers to the problems which torment man in this world'.

[14] Hume 1974, pp. 110–111. Quote on p. 111.

[15] Hume 1969, pp. 287–288. Quote on p. 287.

[16] See e.g. Thompson 1974, pp. 2–3.

[17] Tracy 1981, pp. 3–4. Quote on p. 3. About the Fall as a central Gothic theme, see also Le Tellier 1982, pp. 166–186.

[18] Tracy 1981, pp. 9–10; Le Tellier 1982, pp. 241–264.

[19] Le Tellier 1982, p. 107.

[20] Ibid., p. 137.

[21] Cf. the more elaborate definition, constructed using so-called grounded theory, in Fyhr 2003, pp. 63–114 (esp. pp. 64, 69–71, 81–82, 91–93 are relevant to the aspects highlighted earlier). Fyhr, like me, is partly inspired by Hume and Tracy, but emphasizes different traits.

[22] Hume 1969, p. 287; Le Tellier 1982, pp. 109–127.

[23] Fyhr 2003, pp. 71–74.

[24] Ibid., pp. 94–101, 105–114.

[25] Ibid., pp. 66–67.

[26] On how I define 'supernatural', see chapter 1.

[27] The ten novels are, first, my primary objects of study in this chapter, namely Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* (1772/1979), William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786/1998), Matthew Gregory Lewis's

The Monk (1796/1998), Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806/2000), Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820/1998), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897/2003, not a perfect fit, as we will see). Secondly, my definition also draws on Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794/1980, where the supernatural elements turn out to have a natural explanation, but are nonetheless present throughout most of the narrative), Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764/1998), James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824/1992), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1992). One might protest that there is a risk of circularity if the Gothic genre is defined simply by reading works typically being defined thus, but what I am trying to pin down is actually what the shared traits are of the works that the label has traditionally been attached to. In other words, I am sketching a reception history rather than trying to reach some sort of "essence" existing outside of it.

[28] Stoddard 1998, pp. 43–44.

[29] Tracy 1981, p. 203.

[30] If we go beyond the time period 1790–1830, covered by Tracy's study, a great many more examples can, of course, be found.

[31] Shelley 1818/1992, p. 228: 'Evil thenceforth became my good.'

[32] Vatter 1978, p. 259.

[33] Paglia 2001, pp. 265, 267.

[34] Moers [1976]/1977. For example, Moers reads *Frankenstein* as primarily an exploration of women's ambivalent feelings about childbirth.

[35] Winter 1992, pp. 91–92.

[36] Ibid., p. 100.

[37] E.g. Mäyrä 1999, p. 118; Andriano 1993, p. 10. *Le Diable amoureux* fits well with the definition used here, I would argue, because it treats the theme of a fall, the action begins in earnest in an old ruin, it contains dream visions, dissolves the borders between good and evil, and Satan is the only supernatural being manifesting itself (no good God intervenes, for example). The ending, where the protagonist is saved from the Devil, is not the original one and has the distinct appearance of an afterthought: he has, after all, already eaten of the forbidden fruit by succumbing to Satan's sexual temptation.

[38] Andriano 1993, p. 10.

[39] Faivre 1994, p. 80.

[40] Praz 1933/1960, p. 218; Clery 1995, p. 161.

[41] Shaw 1942, pp. 72–74, 77–78; Fleurant 1975, p. 72.

[42] Shaw 1942, p. 100; Fleurant 1975, pp. 69, 71, 73.

[43] Shaw 1942, p. 100; Fleurant 1975, p. 71.

[44] Fleurant 1975, p. 69.

[45] Ibid., p. 71.

[46] Todorov 1970/1993, pp. 24–27, 82, 85.

[47] For a more thorough discussion of *Le Diable amoureux*, see my introduction and notes to the recent Swedish translation of it (Faxneld 2010a).

[48] Cazotte 1772/1991, pp. 70–71. All quotes are from the English translation by Judith Landry. Original: 'Je servirai mon vainqueur; je l'instruirai de la sublimité de son être dont il ignore les prérogatives: il nous soumette, avec les éléments dont j'aurai abandonné l'empire, les esprits de toutes les sphères. Il est fait pour être le roi du monde, et j'en sera la reine' (Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 93).

[49] Cazotte 1772/1991, p. 72. Original: 'de m'en rendre digne en me donnant des conaissances qui ne sont point réservées au commun des homes' (Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 94).

[50] Cazotte 1772/1991, pp. 72–73; Cazotte 1979, p. 95.

[51] Cazotte 1772/1991, p. 81. Original: 'Étouffer une flamme céleste, le seul ressort au moyen duquel l'âme et le corps peuvent agir réciproquement l'un sur l'autre et se forcer de concourir au maintien nécessaire de leur union! Cela est bien imbécile, mon cher Alvare! Il faut régler ces mouvements, mais quel-quefois il faut leur céder; si on les contraire, si on les soulève, ils échappent tous à la fois, et la raison ne sait plus où s'asseoir pour gouverner' (Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 102).

[52] Mücke 2003, p. 33.

[53] On Cazotte's disputes with the philosophers, see Shaw 1942, pp. 12–13, 51–54.

[54] Their sexual union is marked with two lines of full stops. Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 117.

[55] Cazotte 1772/1991, pp. 100, 101. Original: 'Je suis le diable, mon cher Alvare, je suis le diable'; 'je prétends te combler. Tu conviens déjà que je ne suis pas aussi dégoûtant que l'on me fait noir' (Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 118).

[56] Cazotte 1772/1991, pp. 107–109; Cazotte 1772/1979, pp. 119–125.

[57] Muchembled 2000/2002, p. 265; Shaw 1942, pp. 64–65.

[58] Muchembled 2000/2002, pp. 266–268.

[59] Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 124.

[60] Kiessling 1974, pp. 57, 75–77; Andriano 1993, p. 21.

[61] Andriano 1993, p. 20. For a general discussion of this motif, encompassing all of the sources, see Nagel 2007.

[62] Andriano 1993, p. 21.

[63] Rieger 1969, p. 19.

[64] Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 128.

[65] Shaw 1942, p. 60.

[66] O'Reilly 1977, p. 241.

[67] Stableford 2007, p. 22.

[68] Andriano 1993, p. 23.

[69] Boon 1999, p. 30.

[70] Porter 1978, p. 10.

[71] Boon 1999, pp. 35–36.

[72] Shaw 1942, p. 66; Mücke 2003, p. 35.

[73] Clery 1995, pp. 198–199; Shaw 1942, pp. 121–124.

[74] Nodier 1961, pp. 80–85.

[75] Shaw 1942, pp. 67–68. Baudelaire references Cazotte both in his *Journaux intimes* (published posthumously in 1887) and in *Curiosités esthétiques* ('Aesthetic Curiosities', 1868). In his poem 'Le Possédé' ('The Possessed', in *Les Fleurs du mal*, 'The Flowers of Evil', 1857), he quotes one of Biondetta's lines, where she asks Alvare to say to her '*Ô mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore!*' ('Oh my beloved Beelzebub, I adore you!').

[76] Douglass 2004, pp. 106, 119–120.

[77] Mücke 2003, p. 18. Cf. Shaw 1942, p. 67.

[78] Lévi 1860, p. 439: 'devinées'.

[79] Ibid., p. 437: 'est plein d'intuitions magiques'.

[80] Beckford 1786/1997, p. 8.

[81] Ibid., p. 90.

[82] Ibid., p. 38.

[83] Ibid., p. 32.

[84] Ibid., pp. 92–94.

[85] Ibid., p. 106.

[86] Ibid., pp. 106–108.

[87] Ibid., p. 111.

[88] Ibid., p. 115.

[89] Ibid., p. 118.

[90] Ibid., p. 120.

[91] Lonsdale 1998, p. xxvii.

[92] Hume 1974, p. 115.

[93] Lonsdale 1998, pp. ix–x. Quote on p. xi.

[94] Hume 1974, p. 113.

[95] Tellier 1982, p. 66; Lonsdale 1998, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii.

[96] Quoted in Lonsdale 1998, p. xix. Beckford had originally written the novel in French, and it was then translated into English by the Reverend Samuel Henley and issued as a supposed translation from the Arabic (a hoax that few took seriously) (Lonsdale 1998, pp. xvii–xxi). The edition I have used here has the text of the 1816 version, corrected by Beckford.

[97] Ibid., pp. xx–xxi. Quote on p. xxi.

[98] Quoted in McEvoy 1998, p. xxx.

[99] Paglia 1990/2001, p. 265; Praz 1933/1960, pp. 130, 222. On the translations, see Peck 1961, p. 37.

[100] McEvoy 1998, p. vii.

[101] Ibid., p. viii.

[102] Clery 1995, p. 164.

[103] Quoted in Peck 1961, pp. 174–175.

[104] McEvoy 1998, p. x.

[105] Allen 1983, pp. 39–41.
[106] McEvoy 1998, p. ix. For more on the reception of *The Monk*, see Peck 1961, pp. 23–37.
[107] Clery 1995, p. 142.
[108] Praz 1933/1960, p. 300; Peck 1953, pp. 407–408.
[109] Andriano 1993, p. 33.
[110] Peck 1961, pp. 22–23.
[111] Lewis 1796/1998, pp. 50–59.
[112] Ibid., pp. 68–91.
[113] Ibid., p. 224.
[114] Railo 1927, p. 312.
[115] Lewis 1796/1998, p. 259.
[116] Ibid., pp. 225–234. Quote on p. 234.
[117] Ibid., p. 268.
[118] Ibid., p. 269.
[119] Ibid., p. 270.
[120] Ibid., pp. 275–276. Quote on p. 276.
[121] Cf. Faxneld 2006a, pp. 37–42, 55–57.
[122] Lewis 1796/1998, pp. 422–428. Quote on pp. 427–428.
[123] Ibid., p. 428.
[124] Ibid., p. 440.
[125] Andriano 1993, pp. 35–36.
[126] Praz 1933/1960, p. 218. Cf. Peck 1961, pp. 38–39.
[127] Winter 1992, pp. 89–101.
[128] Allen 1983, p. 42.
[129] Dacre 1806/2000, p. 4.
[130] Ibid., p. 8.
[131] Ibid., pp. 50–58.
[132] Ibid., pp. 146–157.
[133] Ibid., p. 155.
[134] Ibid., pp. 206, 215.
[135] Ibid., p. 194.
[136] Ibid., pp. 213–214.
[137] Ibid., p. 214.
[138] Ibid., p. 215.
[139] Dunn 1998, p. 314. Dunn also suggests that 'Victoria here ritually enacts male penetration by stabbing Lilla repeatedly', which seems almost parodically Freudian to me, and quite unconvincing.

Sometimes a stab with a knife is just a stab with a knife.

140 Dacre 1806/2000, p. 267.

141 Ibid., p. 267.

142 Ibid., pp. 267–268.

143 Dunn 1998, pp. 326–327.

144 Michasiw 2000, p. xi.

145 Byron 1980, vol. 1, p. 413.

146 Michasiw 2000, p. xxi.

147 Craciun 2003a, p. 113.

148 Michasiw 2000, pp. xiii, xxiv–xxv (quote on p. xxi); Craciun 2003a, pp. 114, 266. On Shelley and Dacre, see also Dunn 1998, p. 312.

149 Craciun 2003a, pp. 111–113.

150 Ibid., p. 111.

151 Ibid., pp. 147–148. Quote on p. 147.

152 Both Dunn and Craciun make similar observations regarding this. Dunn 1998, p. 318; Craciun 2003a, p. 132.

153 Craciun 2003a, p. 153.

154 Dunn 1998, p. 313.

155 Michasiw 2000, p. x.

156 Melmoth says, 'I beg you will not confound personages who have the honour to be so nearly allied, and yet perfectly distinct as the devil and his agent' (Maturin 1820/1998, p. 435).

157 Ibid., p. 436.

158 Ibid., p. 435.

159 Ibid., p. 190.

160 Ibid., p. 308.

161 Ibid., pp. 306–307.

162 Ibid., p. 303.

163 This would also have applied to the blasphemous parts of the diatribe, which could have caused both legal and professional trouble for the author had they been taken as his views.

164 Ibid., p. 309.

165 Ibid., p. 321.

166 Ibid., p. 319.

167 Ibid., pp. 317–318.

168 Ibid., p. 376.

169 Idman 1923, pp. 266–270.

170 Croker 1821, p. 303.

171 Ibid., p. 304.

[172] Ibid., p. 311.

[173] Maturin 1820/1998, p. 6.

[174] Croker 1821, p. 311.

[175] Quoted in Idman 1923, p. 269.

[176] Baldick 1998, p. vii.

[177] Lee 1911, p. 15.

[178] Institoris & Sprenger 2006, p. 189; Melton 1999, pp. 118–120, 260, 505. Quote on p. 119.

[179] The two poems by Baudelaire are 'Le Vampire' ('The Vampire') and 'Les Métamorphoses du vampire' ('The Metamorphoses of the Vampire').

[180] Melton 1999, pp. 120, 289, 529–530.

[181] Gautier 1979, p. 216: 'Je n'ai jamais été cueillir sur le Golgatha les fleurs de la passion, et le fleuve profond qui coule du flanc du crucifié et fait une ceinture rouge au monde ne m'a pas baigné de ses flots;—mon corps rebelle ne veut point reconnaître la suprématie de l'âme, et ma chair n'entend point qu'on la mortifie.'

[182] On Gautier's hostile view of Christianity, see further Smith 1969, pp. 39–40; Knapp, 1976, pp. 61, 71.

[183] Gautier 1928, pp. 28–29. Original: 'Si tu veux être à moi, je te ferai plus heureux que Dieu lui-même dans son paradis; les anges te jalouseront. Déchire ce funèbre linceul où tu vas t'envelopper; je suis la beauté, je suis la jeunesse, je suis la vie … Que pourrait t'offrir Jéhovah pour compensation? … car je t'aime et je veux te prendre à ton Dieu, devant qui tant de nobles coeurs répandent des flots d'amour qui n'arrivent pas jusqu'à lui' (Gautier 2002, p. 529).

[184] Gautier 1928, p. 28. Original: 'C'est là peut-être ce qui fait que tant de jeunes filles marchent à l'autel avec la ferme résolution de refuser d'une manière éclatante l'époux qu'on leur impose, et que pas une seule n'exécute son projet' (Gautier 2002, p. 528). He further explains: 'One dares not thus cause so great a scandal to all present, nor deceive the expectations of so many people. All those eyes, all those wills seem to weigh down upon you like a leaden cape; and, moreover, measures have been so well taken, everything has been so thoroughly arranged beforehand and after a fashion so evidently irrevocable, that the will yields to the weight of circumstances and utterly breaks down.' Original: 'On n'ose causer un tel scandale devant tout le monde ni tromper l'attente de tant de personnes; toutes ces volontés, tous ces regards semblent peser sur vous comme une chape de plomb; et puis les mesures sont si bien prises, tout est si bien réglé à l'avance, d'une façon si évidemment irrévocable, que la pensée cède au poids de la chose et s'affaisse complètement' (Gautier 2002, p. 529).

[185] Gautier 1928, p. 30. Original: 'à-dire chaste, ne pas aimer … se détourner de toute beauté, se crever les yeux' (Gautier 2002, p. 531).

[186] Andriano 1993, p. 82.

[187] Gautier 1928, p. 48. Original: 'Pourquoi as-tu écouté ce prêtre imbécile? n'étais-tu pas heureux?' (Gautier 2002, p. 552).

[188] Gautier 1928, p. 38. Andriano 1993, p. 79.

[189] Gautier 1928, p. 47. Original: 'à un démon plutôt qu'à un apôtre ou à un ange'; 'un abominable sacrilege' (Gautier 2002, p. 551).

[190] Gautier 1928, p. 39. Original: 'Belzebuth en personne' (Gautier 2002, p. 542).

[191] Cazotte 1772/1979, p. 118: 'Mon cher Béelzébuth, je t'adore'. Tellingly, Gautier's narrator connects Clarimonde with Satanic pride, says she lifts her head with a snake-like movement and has a hand 'cold as a serpent's skin' (Gautier 1928, pp. 27, 29). Quote on p. 29. Original: 'froide comme la peau d'un serpent' (Gautier 2002, p. 530).

[192] The final lines are: 'I have regretted her more than once, and I regret her still. … the love of God was not enough to replace hers. And this, brother, is the story of my youth. Never gaze upon a woman, and walk with eyes ever fixed upon the ground, for, however chaste and peaceful you may be, a single moment is enough to make you lose eternity' (Gautier 1928, p. 48). Original: '[J]e l'ai regrettée plus d'une fois et je la regrette encore … . l'amour de Dieu n'était pas de trop pour remplacer le sien. Voilà, frère, l'histoire de ma jeunesse. Ne regardez jamais une femme, et marchez toujours les yeux fixés en terre, car, si chaste et si calme que vous soyez, il suffit d'une minute pour vous faire perdre l'éternité' (Gautier 2002, p. 552). The concluding sentence suggests the listener should never even look at a woman, but is clearly intended to illustrate the unreasonable demands the Catholic Church puts on priests (and, in extension, on everyone). The eternal regret at having let Clarimonde go that precedes this advice seems much stronger and more heart-felt on the narrator's part.

[193] We should note here, however, that Gautier himself was certainly not a feminist by any means, and the ideas expressed in many of his works are decidedly male chauvinist.

[194] For examples of her lesbianism, see Le Fanu 1977, pp. 98, 106–107, 109, 134.

[195] Creed 1993, p. 61.

[196] Ibid., p. 59. A (vague) connection between vampires and lesbianism can be seen in a couple of texts prior to 'Carmilla' as well: Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816) and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). In 'Christabel', both vampirism and lesbianism are merely hinted at. In *Les Fleurs du mal*, the connection is that poems about vampires and lesbians, respectively, are included in the same section of the book. They do not, however, figure in the same poems.

[197] Le Fanu 1977, pp. 113, 145.

[198] Ibid., p. 191. On the role of Christianity in 'Carmilla', see also Veeder 1980, pp. 205, 221.

[199] Le Fanu 1977, pp. 258–260.

[200] Wisker 2000, p. 170.

[201] Senf 1979, pp. 78–79. Auerbach 1995, p. 47.

[202] Another alternative is, of course, to interpret Carmilla's words as simply referring to the transition from girl to woman, but I believe my interpretation to be more plausible given the context. Veeder suggests the words refer to 'the transition between girlhood and transcendence', with a 'frightening vampirism' as an intermediary stage (Veeder 1980, p. 215).

[203] Le Fanu 1977, p. 270.

[204] Veeder 1980, p. 198.

[205] McCormack 1980, pp. 80–82.

[206] Quoted in McCormack 1980, p. 95. The description came from journalist Charles Gavan Duffy in 1880.

[207] Kline 1992, p. 4. If *Dracula* should be defined as Gothic is another matter, however. Since there is little or no ambiguous merging of goodness and wickedness, and evil is ultimately completely

eradicated by the pious representatives of order and virtue, it diverges in some ways from the definition I have proposed above. Moreover, though Mina is "seduced" (or symbolically raped) by the Count, she is redeemed, thus nullifying her fall. This, too, must be considered quite different from the typical Gothic narratives.

208 Twitchell 1981, p. 132.

209 Punter 1980/1996, vol. 2, p. 16.

210 Herbert 2002, p. 101.

211 Kline 1992, p. 4.

212 Pick 1989, p. 167.

213 Quoted in Roth, Chambers, & Walsh, p. 20.

214 Senf further opines that Stoker makes a point of portraying the many male authorial voices in the text (it consists of letters and excerpts from diaries) as unreliable and full of platitudes, which makes the reader question the values propagated by the men (Senf 1979, p. 199). This, however, rather seems like a projection of Senf's own values onto the text. Stoker and most of his contemporaries hardly felt the moralizing monologues of his male heroes to be platitudes.

215 Ibid.

216 Melton 1999, p. 601.

217 E.g. Stoker 1897/2003, pp. 12, 61, 233, 334, 370.

218 See Leatherdale 1985, p. 176: 'Everything that Christ is meant to be, Dracula either inverts or perverts. Christ is Good: Dracula is Evil—an agent of the devil. Christ was a humble carpenter: Dracula a vainglorious aristocrat. Christ offers light and hope, and was resurrected at dawn: Dracula rises at sunset and thrives in darkness. Christ's death at the "stake" was the moment of his rebirth: for the vampire the stake heralds "death" and oblivion. Christ offered his own life so that others might live: Dracula takes the lives of many so that *he* might live. The blood of Christ is drunk at the Eucharist by the faithful; Dracula reverses the process and drinks from *them*. Both preach resurrection and immortality, the one offering spiritual purity, the other physical excess.' Cf. Gist Raible 1979, who anticipates this analysis.

219 For more on the connections between Satan and Dracula, see Faxneld 2004a; Kline 1992, pp. 53–54, 59–60.

220 Most obviously, his statement that 'I have been so long master that I would be master still—or at least that none would be master of me' (Stoker 1897/2003, p. 27), echoes the individualist Lucifer's defiant attitude towards God in *Paradise Lost* (The phrase 'Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven' is often incorrectly attributed to Lucifer in Milton's poem, but is in fact spoken by his henchman Mammon. Lucifer himself does, however, share this sentiment.) Dracula's grand words about himself, 'me who commanded nations, and intrigued for them, and fought for them, hundreds of years before they [the vampire hunters] were born' (p. 306), recalls the proud warlord Lucifer at the beginning of Milton's poem. His declaration that he loves 'the shade and the shadow, and would be alone with my thoughts if I may' (p. 31) could be an echo of the brooding Satan we meet further on in Milton's narrative.

221 Christopher Craft, for example, talks of 'a woman whose demonism is figured as the power to penetrate' and views the difference between penetrating men and receptive women as the very difference the vampire hunters set out to uphold (Craft 2004, p. 261).

222 Senf 2004, p. 337.

[223] Stoker 1897/2003, pp. 46–47.

[224] Ibid., p. 61.

[225] This is pointed out by both Joseph Andriano and Clive Leatherdale. Andriano 1993, p. 108; Leatherdale 1985, p. 136.

[226] Stoker 1897/2003, p. 67.

[227] Ibid., pp. 171–172.

[228] Blinderman 1980, p. 426.

[229] Demetrakopoulos 1977, p. 107.

[230] Stoker 1897/2003, p. 228.

[231] Ibid., p. 201. He also praises her by saying that she is '[s]o true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist—and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish'.

[232] Ibid., p. 300.

[233] The parallel to Revelation is Clive Leatherdale's. Leatherdale 1985, pp. 183–184.

[234] Stoker 1897/2003, p. 343. On diabolical baptisms, the obscene kiss that witches gave Satan and the mark he put on their foreheads, see, for instance, Guazzo 1988, pp. 14–17, 35, 89, where these practices are also depicted in famous and frequently reproduced woodcuts.

[235] Stoker 1897/2003, p. 391.

[236] Ibid., p. 391.

[237] Kline 1992, p. 258.

[238] Auerbach 1995, p. 4.

[239] Auerbach, 1982, p. 24.

[240] Senf 1979, pp. 207–208.

[241] Many authors and filmmakers have contributed to this development, but the most important of them all must surely be Anne Rice with her Vampire Chronicles series of books (1976–2003), starting with *Interview with the Vampire* in 1976.

[242] The exact reasons for this are, of course, complex beyond measure, but one reason could be the demise of the grand narratives (to use Lyotard's often criticized terminology) that would earlier have served to keep mythical villains like Satan and vampires in a fixed position as evil—whereas they now are cut loose from their original context and can assume new roles—combined with the spread of moral relativism through postmodernist deconstruction of absolute values (for a critique of some common oversimplifications related to this issue, see Faxneld 2011b). Robert Le Tellier identifies 1968 as an important year in the history of Gothic fiction, since this was when a more positive view of these novels as worthwhile works of literature could first be discerned among scholars and critics, which resulted in a number of reissues of the classics of the genre (Le Tellier 1982, pp. 34–35). The year 1968 was also when Anton Szandor LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* was written, and this is hardly a coincidence. Both can be perceived as expressions of a broader trend in society. The anti-hero, rebel, and freak became the man of the day, and public interest in the supernatural and the occult boomed. The truly visible rise of the anti-hero could perhaps be located to the mid-1960s, when the counterculture started looking for subversive icons to symbolize its resistance against mainstream values. This tendency then quickly came to colour most forms of popular culture, since so many of the creative minds of the following decades had their background in the counterculture. It was not

just the arts that saw an influx of talent with this background; many of the sharpest minds in academia during the last few decades have been shaped by the same milieu. It is therefore only logical that scholars of literature have embraced figures like the vampire as a hero.

[243] Kline 1992, p. 127.

[244] Dijkstra 1986, p. 348.

[245] Olesk 2001; Juutila 1996, pp. 65–66.

[246] DuBois 2004, pp. 205, 209–210.

[247] Juutila 1996, pp. 65–66; Melkas 2007, pp. 55–57, 61. As quoted by Juutila, one of her characters, for example, states that the man she loves is 'dearer to me than the Christian teaching' (Juutila 1996, p. 66).

[248] Jones 2012, p. 44. It may appear anachronistic to highlight such issues among seventeenth-century Estonian peasants, where a patriarchal order would have been the natural thing to both women and men. However, the novel is, in spite of its archaic style, written very much from the perspective of an independent early twentieth-century woman deeply concerned with issues of gender and power. Moreover, we are, of course ultimately dealing with a literary product (with time-specific ideological undertones), not real historical peasants.

[249] Kallas 1928/1930, p. 34. I quote from the English translation by Alex Marsten and Bryan Rhys.

[250] Melkas 2000, p. 76.

[251] Kallas 1928/1930, pp. 39–40.

[252] Ibid., p. 45.

[253] Juutila 1996, p. 69: 'Aino Kallas har vilda och starka visioner om en helstöpt kvinnlighet, men denna kvinnlighet kan inte förverkligas.'

[254] Kallas 1928/1930, p. 48.

[255] Kallas 1978, vol. 1, pp. 402–403.

[256] Kallas 1928/1930, pp. 39, 42. Quote on p. 42.

[257] Odstedt 1943/2012, pp. 29, 87, 99, 106, 116, 164, 167, 200, 217, 227, 321, 376; Sconduto 2008, pp. 22–23, 128–179 (note that the orthodox theological standpoint was that the metamorphoses of witches into animals was illusory, rather than an actual transformation of the physical substance of a human). The link between witches and werewolves is also mentioned in literature of the period that Kallas may have read, like J. W. Wickwar's *Witchcraft and the Black Art* (1925), p. 131.

[258] Hawthorne 2001, pp. 20–22, Quote on p. 22.

[259] Stenbock 1993, p. 218. 'The Other Side' was first published in *The Spirit Lamp*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1893.

[260] Ibid., p. 213.

[261] Quoted in Coudray 2006, p. 48.

[262] Ibid., pp. 46–49.

[263] Käll 2012, pp. 362–364.

[264] DuBois mentions Kallas reading the *Malleus* as preparation for writing her novella *Reigin pappi* ('The Pastor of Reigi', 1926). DuBois 2004, p. 221.

[265] Ibid., pp. 211–212. Garnett's novel *Lady into Fox* (1922) also has obvious parallels to *Sudenmorsian*, but not with regards to the Satanic motifs.

[266] Garnett 1994, p. 35. Garnett had known Warner since 1922.

[267] Warner is not mentioned in the name index of Kallas's diaries, however.

[268] Jones 2012, p. 46.

[269] Melkas 2007, p. 54.

[270] DuBois 2004, pp. 226–227.

[271] DuBois 2004, pp. 212–213.

[272] Jones 2012, pp. 47–48.

[273] Juutila 1996, p. 69; Kallas 1928/1930, p. 52. The two words are the same, but the original Greek term has in post-classical times come to be used differently than the Latin and English equivalents.

[274] Kallas 1928/1930, p. 52.

[275] Ibid., pp. 86–89. Cf. Melkas 2000, p. 80.

[276] Kallas 1928/1930, p. 39.

[277] Olesk 2001.

[278] Kurvet-Käosaar 2006, p. 56.

[279] Kallas 1928/1930, pp. 114–115.

[280] DuBois 2004, pp. 228, 231. Quote on p. 231.

[281] Melkas 2000, p. 83.

[282] Jones 2012, p. 49.

[283] Regarding Kallas's private contemplation of these matters, see Kurvet-Käosaar 2006.

[284] DuBois's evaluation of the three novels Kallas wrote in London is typical. He calls them 'a powerful, feminist critique of patriarchal control, especially as it impinges upon the legal and emotional rights of women' (DuBois 2004, p. 206).

[285] Ibid., p. 213.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

1 SAMUEL 15:23[1]

6

Witches as Rebels against Patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

English literature scholar Maureen Moran has argued that discourse on witches in late nineteenth-century Britain almost exclusively served a conservative purpose:

> Despite an acknowledgement of the capacity of a male-ordered society to oppress and victimise women, witchcraft narratives and historical commentaries reinforce traditional concepts of femininity, associating acceptable womanliness with passivity, submission to authority, and chastity (or with guilt and repentance). A manly, unfeminine woman may—as a so-called sorceress or witch—tantalize or momentarily assume power, but such women are eventually revealed as wicked or ineffective, even ill-advised, in the challenge they mount to society. … For all its potential as a metaphor for transformation, witchcraft in Victorian writing provides opportunity, not for a radical critique and refashioning of social roles and expectations, but for a conservative reaffirmation of traditional structures of influence and power.[2]

In this chapter, I will present a number of examples (not only from Britain, however) that contradict Moran's somewhat one-sided analysis. As will be demonstrated, the subversive potential of the figure of the witch was utilized, both in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, to attack the oppression of women. In the case of Britain (and this, of course, applies to all nations), we must also take into consideration the influx of insurrectionary representations of witches from other countries. One example is the 1863 English translation of Jules Michelet's historical monograph *La Sorcière* ('The Witch', 1862), probably the single most influential text presenting a sort of feminist vision of witches.

Turn-of-the century discourse on witches is nonetheless also a typical example of the interdependence of Demonized feminism and Satanic feminism, and how the line between the two is not always completely clear. Admittedly, the witch was, as Moran rightly points out, a motif frequently used by the enemies of female emancipation, who employed it to drastically illustrate the supposed dangers such political tendencies posed to society. This, however, further strengthened the symbolic ties between the witch and feminism, and thus paradoxically reinforced the popularity of the figure among some feminists with counter-reading as their subversive tactic of choice.[3]

My focus in what follows is primarily texts that stress the connection between witches and Satan, and which simultaneously ascribe feminist traits to the former. Some examples of pro-feminist depictions of non-Satanic witches as feminists will also be discussed. These constituted an important indirect endorsement of the feminist appreciation of explicitly Satanic witches, and likely made the appropriation of these more sinister aspects of the witch seem less drastic. If misunderstood pagan witches were all right, why not give a suffragette stamp of approval to Devil-worshipping anti-patriarchal sorceresses too?

The material employed in the present discussion primarily stems from the 1860s onwards, since that is when the relevant use of the motif first appears. The chapter hence commences with a discussion of Michelet's aforementioned monograph, then considers how medical discourse on historical witches as hysterics was conflated with slander of feminists as hysterical and caricatures of them as witches. After that follows a treatment of Matilda Joslyn Gage, an American feminist who published texts in the 1880s and 1890s where she in laudatory terms presented a supposed early modern witch cult as a Satanic rebellion against patriarchal injustice. As will be shown, Gage relied heavily on Michelet, but set his ideas in a fully fledged feminist framework. She also actively dealt with the issue of witches as hysterics. Another author influenced by Michelet was the amateur folklorist Charles Leland, who downplayed the Satanic content (though it was still undeniably present) and drew direct and approbatory parallels to the feminism of his day. The short stories of George Egerton, who used the witch as a metaphor for the liberated modern woman, are scrutinized next. They are significant foremost because they disseminated widely the conception of the witch as an emblem of feminine freedom. The next case, journalist Oliver Madox Hueffer, lauded Satan as a cultural hero and held up witchcraft as

empowering for women. The final part of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of visual representations of the witch, especially focusing on how she can be seen as a symbol of female strength in both positive and negative ways in the sculptures and paintings of male as well as female artists. Mary Wigman's expressionist witch dance is another visual example of the witch as an icon of liberation. Benjamin Christensen's silent film *Häxan*, finally, summarizes many of the discourses on witchcraft in circulation.

Before commencing with the analysis of the sources, I would like to note that this chapter, even though it contains a multitude of examples, does not represent the totality of my treatment of witches, as they are to be found in several other texts that I will consider further on, for example, in chapters 7, 8, and 11.

'REASON, RIGHT, AND NATURE': JULES MICHELET'S HEROIC SATANIST WITCHES

Scholars and the educated classes in the nineteenth century generally held that the witch persecutions were caused by a set of irrational religious beliefs eventually defeated by the logic and justice of Enlightenment thought. The perhaps most influential academic author in this paradigm was Wilhelm Gottfried Soldan (1803–1869), whose main work was *Geschichte der Hexenprozesse aus dem Quellen dargestellt* ('The History of the Witch Trials Described Using the Sources', 1843, substantially revised and expanded by later scholars in 1880 and 1912). Such early studies relied almost exclusively on the handbooks of learned demonology, like the *Malleus Maleficarum*, when attempting to explain the phenomenon.[4] Prior to the 1960s, archival material was seldom used at all. In an important article, Rune Hagen has demonstrated how this one-sided emphasis on learned opinions created a distorted image, which does not fit well with the actual historical attitudes we have come to know through later examinations of trial records and similar documents.[5]

Witch trial scholarship enjoyed immense popularity in the nineteenth century. For example, a bibliography of French studies of witch trials and demonic possession produced before the year 1900 contains more than 1,700 posts.[6] However, the country where the most influential works were produced at the start of the century was not France, but Germany, with Soldan as the prime exponent. In a later important German study, Joseph Hansen's *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozesse im Mittelalter, und die*

Entstehung der Grossen Hexenverfolgung ('Witchcraft Delusion, Inquisition and Witch Trials during the Middle Ages, and the Emergence of the Great Persecution of Witches', 1900), the atrocities were explicitly blamed on late medieval theologians.[7] Such anticlerical attitudes were common in this context throughout the century, and writing on witches often became a pretext for vilifying the church (be it Catholic or Protestant).[8]

The French historian Jules Michelet's (1798–1874) book *La Sorcière* (1862) is a characteristic example of this approach. Indeed, the author was known primarily as an anticlerical agitator during the later part of his career.[9] This work is probably the most influential celebration ever of the witch as a Satanist (eulogies to the witch as a benevolent Pagan are easier to find). Interestingly, the figure is here also simultaneously a sort of feminist, even if, as we will see, the label is not unproblematically applicable. What sort of historian, then, would write a book like this? Michelet was an enormously prolific author and one of the most famous historians of his time. It was supposedly he who popularized the term *renaissance*, and he was one of the first to attempt to write a history of the people, instead of the usual narratives centred on kings and generals. Another pioneering aspect of his work was, at least according to his own claims, that he was the first historian to rely chiefly on primary sources when doing research. After being fired from his position at the Collège de France (first in January 1848, being reinstated after the revolution in February that year, and then again, for good, in 1852) due to being suspected of sedition, he became something of an academic martyr in dissenting circles. His influence thus became much greater than when his pontificating had mostly reached the elite students attending his lectures.[10] According to the charges, his teaching was 'of a nature to trouble the public peace' and his courses had 'given rise to the most scandalous scenes'.[11] As can be garnered from this, sober and balanced historical research was never Michelet's forte, and his books always contained at least as much political polemics and starry-eyed reverie as they did scholarship.[12] His literary talent, enabling him to make history come to colourful and poetic life, made him a marketable author in his own time, and he has remained popular until this day.[13]

During the course of his life, Michelet's views went through radical changes. In his early works, he remained sentimentally attached to Christianity —although he was not a devout believer in any way—and praised its medieval manifestations enthusiastically. But his religious doubts, in

combination with a burgeoning sympathy for progressive political reforms, eventually caused a revisal of opinion. In the early 1840s, he came to realize the church was not a thing of the romantic past to feel sentimental about but, in Ceri Crossley's words, 'an active force blocking the social and political changes which he wished to see implemented'.[14] Over time he also became openly oriented towards left-wing politics. Michelet had a close personal relationship with Proudhon in the early 1850s, and this no doubt helped increase the former's sympathy for socialism.[15] Another thing that changed over time was Michelet's attitude to nature. At the beginning of his career, he had seen it as chaotic, revolting, and opposed to the masculine domain of history and spirit, but over time he developed a high esteem for it, as expressed in his book *Le Peuple* ('The People', 1846).[16] This parallels modifications in his opinion of woman.

In 1840, Michelet began a relationship with the mother of one of his students. She died of cancer in 1842, but had by then altered his view of the female sex permanently by impressing him as a model of the caring parent. Arthur Mitzman remarks that their liaison seems to have 'triggered a latent reverence for motherhood and nature that had been buried in him for decades under a crust of anti-feminist asceticism'.[17] Michelet could now present himself as a eulogist and champion of woman, claiming he wanted to rehabilitate her and defend her against oppression from male authorities past and present—like feudal lords, employers, loutish husbands, and, most important, the Catholic Church. Even so, he was firmly paternalistic in his attitude and held men up as stronger and more intelligent. Righteous men like him therefore needed to come to woman's rescue. These sentiments, however, never found an expression in Michelet participating on either side in the debates raging over, for example, suffrage for women, and he often seemed largely oblivious to the feminist agitation going on around him. Feminists were not unaware of him and in her book *La Femme affranchie* ('Woman Set Free', 1860), the midwife, 1848 revolutionary, and women's rights activist Jenny d'Héricourt criticizes him for the contradictions inherent in the historian's claim to be working towards freeing woman, while at the same time thinking for her.[18]

In fact, a woman may have done some of the thinking for Michelet, since the conception of Satan in *La Sorcière* was probably influenced by George Sand's positive portrayal of him in *Consuelo* (see chapter 3). Michelet refers to this novel in the epilogue of his own book, which is filled with overt praise

of Satan. In his diary he notes that it was after reading the passages in *Consuelo* about Lucifer the noble revolutionary that he subsequently dreamed (!) and then wrote this epilogue. A central idea in the book is that modern scientific medicine has its origins in the practices of village wise women, and M. Ione Crummy has argued that this is also derived from works by Sand.[19] The two corresponded, and on February 13, 1861, Sand sent Michelet a letter advising him to write something on botany 'so that the blind of this world may learn to see, understand and love this earthly paradise, this adorable *Cybèle* that their malice and stupidity have made a hell'. This may very well be the inspiration for his attacks in *La Sorcière* on Christianity's denigration of nature.[20]

FIGURE 6.1 Illustration by Martin van Maele (1863–1926) from a 1911 edition of *La Sorcière*.

La Sorcière is a peculiar book (figure 6.1). It has been characterised both as 'experimental ethnography' and 'approximating blank verse'.[21] Although nominally a scholarly work of history, it is nothing of the sort. Original sources are referred to occasionally, but most of the text is intensely poetical and polemical rather than soberly descriptive or coldly analytical. This eccentric and highly entertaining opus can be counted as part of Michelet's efforts to write popular works intended to reach those not part of his upper-class audience at the Collège de France.[22] In order to discuss the figure of the witch in *La Sorcière*, we must first look at Michelet's portrayal of Satan, her

god. As mentioned already, the witch is unequivocally a Satanist in Michelet's eyes and not, for example (as would later be a popular interpretation), a misunderstood pagan.[23] Satan, however, is mostly a benevolent character or symbol of goodness to Michelet, which he contrasts with the obscurantism and oppression the church stands for in this text.[24] As would be expected, the early modern understanding of the witch is caustically dismissed by Michelet, who dedicates an entire chapter to tearing apart the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which he calls 'a pedantic book … by a man truly terrified'.[25] The Devil that the *Malleus* expresses such fear of is a very different concept for the radical republican historian. He postulates that Satan represents a number of positive things: *nature*, which 'the Church has rejected … as impure and suspect'; *the arts*, which he is the patron and originator of; *laughter*, declared unsuitable by the church but utterly necessary to bear the sorrows of life; *medicine*, the church variety of which is a mere 'resignation, a waiting and a hoping for death', whereas Satan is 'a physician, healer of the living'; *necromancy*, through which Satan in compassion with our grief evokes 'the shades of the dear ones'. Finally, 'Logic, the free Reason', also condemned by the church, is another of the blessings Satan brings.[26]

Michelet argues that the origins of the grand accomplishments of mankind, or its golden ages, are certainly not to be found in Christianity. The renaissance, for example, was the result of 'the satanic efforts of men', and came about 'far away from schools and the literate, in the *school of nonattendance*, where Satan held lessons for the sorceress and the shepherd'.[27] The book's ending words are a celebration of the Promethean spirit of science. Inventions like the hot air balloon and electricity are described in enthusiastic words, and Michelet exclaims 'O divine magic!' The final sentence lays down that '[i]f Satan does this, we are bound to pay him homage, considering that he might be an aspect of God'.[28] Throughout the entire volume, it is especially Satan as the begetter of science and medicine that is brought to the fore. Regarding the latter, Michelet explains 'Medicine, especially, was the true Satanism, a revolt against disease, the merited scourge of God. Plainly sinful to stay the soul on its way towards heaven and replunge it into life!'[29] Satan's work, according to Michelet, 'rests on three eternal rocks', namely 'Reason, Right, and Nature', and 'a woman, the unhappy Sorceress, gave the popular impetus to science'.[30]

Woman, then, is Satan’s chosen one, and Michelet underscores this fact numerous times. He ascertains, for example, that ‘Satan returns to his Eve. Woman is still that in the world which is most natural’.[31] It is in her hand, Michelet says, that Satan lays ‘the fruit of science and of nature’.[32] In particular, the witch was skilled in aiding other women with their medical problems and acting as a midwife.[33] Further, the witch is the one whom ‘the weeping girl’ turns to in order to have an abortion. She also teaches the ‘miserable wife, burdened by the children born every year only to die’ how to ‘cool off the pleasure at the moment [of the man’s orgasm], render it barren’.[34] In other words, the witch gives women power over their own bodies, which can be seen as a form of feminist practice. Moreover, *La Sorcière* explicitly connects caring about women’s health issues (and remedying low self-esteem in this sex) with Satanism:

> It takes no less than the Devil, woman’s ally of old and her confidant in the Garden of Eden, it takes no less than this witch, this monster who does everything against the grain, in direct contradiction to the realm of the sacred, to care about woman, to tread custom underfoot and cure her despite herself. The poor creature held herself in such lowly estimation![35]

Notable in this quote is the focus on inversion. Throughout his book, Michelet is clearly constructing a counter-discourse to undermine Christianity, where received notions are turned on their head. For example, the witch is not a poisoner, but one who uses poisons to heal. Poison, believed to be evil, thus turns out to be something good if properly understood and used.[36] Satan is similarly inverted. He is not the ‘prince of lies’ as Christian tradition labelled him, but stands for logic and reason.[37] Rather than causing diseases, his followers cure them. Instead of making witches his slaves, as the wisdom of the Inquisition would have it, he emancipates them. In the quote, this is tied to how the witch and her helper Satan invert Christianity’s negative image of woman and her body. Michelet is quite consistently supportive of such struggles against the misogyny of the church and its worldly extensions, and sets about improving woman’s supposed lack of self-esteem. However, he introduces a small caveat concerning his idealization of the witch:

> Do not conclude too hastily from what I have said in the preceding chapter that my purpose is to whitewash, to clear of all blame whatever, the gloomy bride of the Evil One. If she often effected good, she was equally capable of grievous mischief. There is no great and irresponsible power that

> does not also abuse. … What power like that of Satan's chosen bride, who heals, predicts, divines, evokes the spirits of the dead, can spell-bind you, turn you into a hare or a wolf, make you find a treasure, and, more than that, make you love! This terrible power that unites all the others! How should a violent spirit, all too often wounded, sometimes become very perverted, not have used it for the sake of hatred and vengeance, and for the pleasure in malice and impurity?[38]

In spite of these words, *La Sorcière* is mainly a panegyric over the witch. This becomes even clearer if we consider Michelet's claim that her political sympathies are very close to his own. Approvingly, he states that she aided in struggles against the feudal system.[39] The witches' sabbath—the ritual rebellion against God in the form of a Black Mass—thus had its basis in frustration at social injustices, and Satanism is a form of proto-socialism. God was the protector of the nobility, deaf to the prayers of the peasant: 'In vain he called for it [a miracle] in the day of his despair and utmost need. From that hour forth Heaven seemed but the ally of his savage executioners, and itself a savage executioner. Hence the *Black Mass* and the *Jacquerie* [a 1358 peasant revolt].'[40] In the former, the serfs' elevation of themselves, their own social class, is the central concern, Michelet (anticipating Durkheim) theorizes: '[I]n Satan's diffuse shadow the people venerated nothing else than the people.'[41]

There were also elements of fertility cult present, where wheat was offered to the Spirit of the Earth (seemingly another name for Satan, who, as mentioned, is elsewhere held up as a god of nature by Michelet). Birds were let loose, 'no doubt from the woman's bosom', to bring Satan, 'the *God of Liberty*, the sighs and wishes of the serfs'. The boon they asked for was '[t]hat we others, their far-away descendants, might win enfranchisement'.[42] Michelet's peasant Satanists stand in opposition to both the church and the secular authorities, which are seen as part of the same unjust power structure. Their Satanism hence represents a sort of religion of revolution, to use Bruce Lincoln's term, since it defines itself 'in opposition to the dominant social fraction itself, not its religious arm alone'.[43] Since the witches in Michelet's fanciful narrative aided in peasant revolts, Lincoln's criteria of promoting direct action can also be considered present.

Michelet's conception of witches as revolutionaries became widespread. It can be seen, for example, in Moncure Daniel Conway's *Demonology and Devil-lore* (1878), where the persecutions of witches are likened to 'the recent slaughter of Communists in Paris'.[44] Conforming to his theme of liberation and revolt against ruling fractions, Michelet moreover gives the ritual of the Black Mass a strongly feminist slant:

> The *Black Mass*, in its primary aspect, would seem to be [a] redemption of Eve, cursed by Christianity. Woman, at the sabbath, fills every function. She is priest, and altar, and consecrated host, whereof all the people take communion. At the bottom of things, is she not God himself?[45]

Michelet opines that male peasants would have been hesitant to accept this liturgy, but their women (who created it) were powerful enough to implement it anyway.[46] In the descriptions of these rituals, Michelet's famous talent for writing poetical prose blooms in full. 'Imagine the scene', he begins, 'a wide heath, often in the neighbourhood of an old Celtic dolmen at the edge of a wood.'[47] He then sketches a highly detailed image of a sabbath where a great wooden effigy of Satan is set up. This figure's virile attributes make him, Michelet says, a sort of Pan or Priapus figure (note this emphasis on Satan, the helper of woman, as highly masculine, a notion that might reflect Michelet's self-image as a manly champion of women). The reactions of the attendees to the effigy are mixed: 'some found only terror' when looking at him, while 'others were moved by the haughty melancholy that seemed to enfold the eternal Exile'.[48] Michelet, however, is more interested in the officiating priestess and waxes lyrical about her:

> The Devil's Bride cannot be a child; she should be in full thirty years of age, with the face of a Medea and the beauty of sorrow; her eyes deep-set, tragic and feverish, with streams of serpents descending aimlessly, I speak of a torrent of black, untamable hair. Perhaps, on top of all, a crown of vervain, the funereal ivy, and the violets of death.[49]

A key moment (the details of which, he asserts, are familiar to us from a later imitation, the trial of La Voisin and her circle of 'Satanists' in the seventeenth century) of the ritual, Michelet proposes, is when the priestess herself proceeds to act as the altar: 'By her prostrate body, by her humiliated person, by the vast black silk of her hair, lost in the dust, she … offered up herself. On her loins a demon performed Mass, pronounced the *Credo*, deposited the offering.'[50] As can be seen, Michelet lets his narrative shift between rationalizing explanations (Satan's presence is simply in the form a wooden effigy) and fantastic motifs (a demon performing a Mass). Both moduses are used to paint the witch as a rebel against feudal, religious, and, in some sense, patriarchal oppression.

But how "feminist" is this book really? Michelet may talk of a 'redemption of Eve' and woman herself as God, but the witch does not embody any very specific breaks with the patriarchal order. This has its basis in the fact that even if Michelet constantly up-valued woman in his late works, at the end of

the day he still thought she should remain in the home and reform the nation from there—by being an exemplary mother, cook, and nurse. The conclusion Michelet ultimately draws in *La Sorcière* is that

> Woman, busied during the later centuries with men's affairs, has in requital lost her own true rôle, that of *healing*, and *consoling*, that of the fairy that cures. This is her true priesthood. And it belongs to her, no matter what the Church may have said.[51]

This opinion can hardly have pleased nineteenth-century suffragettes, but even so it seems the evocative imagery of *La Sorcière* struck a chord with some of them (including Matilda Joslyn Gage, who will be discussed further on in this chapter). As we will see, the ring of this chord appears to have been sufficiently pleasing to the ears of certain feminists to drown out conservative statements like the one just quoted. One reason for this might be that *La Sorcière* is a loosely held together and unstructured book, which perhaps makes it easier to draw certain themes and motifs from it, even if others, or even the overall argument, are not found appealing. As Stephen A. Kippur points out, there is also a discrepancy between the figure of the witch as Michelet paints her, and Michelet's ideal modern woman, the caring wife. None of the witches he describes are even married.[52] The witches can thus be seen as figures different from the utopian vision of femininity presented at the end of the book; and if the latter is not suited to the tastes of most feminists, the former may still be. Diane Purkiss highlights that in the witch cult Michelet constructs—which is part religion of revolution, part fertility cult—he equates the altar-body of the priestess with the earth. In her opinion, this renders 'woman passive, the prone recipient of male cultivation' and reconstructs problematic notions of woman as nature and man as culture.[53] This critique was probably not something feminists in Michelet's own time would have perceived as the major problematic issue in the text. Purkiss's objection stems from an antipathy towards all forms of essentialism. Such a stance is typical of the mainstream of late twentieth-century (academic) feminism, but not to the same extent of the varieties belonging to the previous century. In those pre-social constructivism times, essentialism was, of course, a commonplace even in feminist circles. Moreover, the very fact that the feminine was up-valued and the patriarchal traits of Christianity attacked would probably have impressed some feminists in this era as a welcome thing, even though they would have been irritated by other aspects of the work.

Considering the partly salacious content (Black Masses celebrated on naked buttocks, the author's enthusiastic praise of Satan as a phallic god of proto-socialism, and so forth), it is hardly surprising that *La Sorcière* caused a scandal on its first publication. The initial edition of 8,000 copies was issued in November 1862 and quickly sold out. The publisher was called to an interrogation by the police, and subsequently let Michelet know that a second printing was out of the question. The rebellious historian then turned to the Brussels-based publisher Albert Lacroix (this was a common tactic, as censorship laws were less strict in Belgium), who had recently brought out Victor Hugo's controversial *Les Misérables* (1862).[54] Lacroix accepted the offer, and Michelet's book remained in print. In fact, it has never gone out of print, making it a constantly available source for others to draw on.[55]

HYSTERICAL WITCHES AND MEDICAL CONCEPTIONS OF WOMAN AS MYSTERIOUS AND DEMONIC

Not only historians took an interest in witches. Representatives of the burgeoning discipline of psychiatry also found them fascinating and polemically useful. As I will demonstrate, writing on the topic coming from this direction indirectly created a conflation of witches, feminists, and hysterics that coloured the understanding of the witch in most non-religious discourses of the time. Like Michelet, psychiatrists employed research on witches as a tool to attack the church. It was in this context that witches came to be closely linked to the diagnosis of hysteria.

The relationship between psychiatry and the church had long been problematic in France. The clergy were the traditional healers of the soul, and nuns were time-honoured caretakers of the insane. Psychiatry now swallowed up their market shares in the caretaking business.[56] The new and completely materialistic explanations of what ailed the mentally ill provided by neurologists like Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), head of the Salpêtrière clinic in Paris, also threatened the church on an ontological level. What was worse, many medical men relished this fact and did their best to turn the knife in the wound. The usefulness of an enquiry into the nature of hysteria as anticlerical propaganda may even to some extent have determined this choice of topic for some of those involved. Since the "laws" of hysteria were supposedly universal, they could also be applied to historical phenomena. Demonic possession and mystical ecstasies became a main focus for this

retrospective medicine, since a pathologization of these things would powerfully undermine the authority of Catholicism. What priests had seen as symptoms of possession simply constituted the second phase of a hysterical attack, the *grands mouvements* where arms and legs would flail, the tongue hang out of the mouth, the pupils of the eyes dart in all directions, and so on (figure 6.2).[57]

FIGURE 6.2 The "hysterical arch", the perhaps most well-known and spectacular feature of the classical hysterical attack. Illustration from Jean-Martin Charcot and Paul Richer, *Les Démoniaques dans l'art* (1887).

In the book *Les Démoniaques dans l'art* ('The Possessed in Art', 1887), Charcot and his disciple Paul Richer (1849–1933) analyse old paintings, engravings, and other artworks depicting demonic possession and claim the postures portrayed prove these individuals were in fact hysterics.[58] Charcot's former assistant Paul Regnard published the book *Les Maladies épidémiques de l'esprit: Sorcellerie, magnétisme, morphinisme, délire des grandeurs* ('Epidemic Maladies of the Spirit: Witchcraft, Magnetism, Morphinism, Megalomania', 1887), where it is asserted that witches suffered seizures just like those of hysterics. For example, they would, Regnard says, assume the characteristic hysteric position with an arched back.[59] He underscores that the

witch of the past is identical to the hysteric of today.[60] As H. C. Erik Midelfort points out, the works produced in this anticlerical medical milieu conflate the conditions of the possessed with those of witches. Historically, the two were quite distinct and possession was not a crime.[61]

Charcot's talent for showmanship was an important factor in the success his theories enjoyed. On Tuesdays, he held open lectures where he astonished his audience—in a huge amphitheatre packed to the brim—by displaying the extravagant antics of his hysterical female patients. An attack was triggered by use of hypnosis or the pressing of a 'hysterogenic point', and Charcot then narrated the stages the patient went through. A cataleptic patient could be pierced by needles and pins, a lethargic woman "petrified" into strange postures defying the laws of gravity. In short, the show rivalled those of stage magicians or the startling tricks Spiritist mediums could treat their clients to. Authors and journalists, actors and actresses, *demimondaines*—all came to see Charcot's presentations. They were so popular that they even made the Salpêtrière a tourist attraction listed in official travel guides to Paris.[62] Hysterics were at times also the subjects of experiments with so-called dermographism, where letters or symbols were gently traced onto their skin by doctors and left curiously raised marks that remained clearly visible for an abnormally long duration. The demonic (for instance, the word SATAN) was a favourite subject when choosing what to trace, no doubt reflecting the close connection believed to exist between witchcraft and hysteria. These experiments were presented in heavily illustrated books that fascinated the public (figure 6.3).[63]

FIGURE 6.3 The word *SATAN* appearing on the back of a hysterical patient. Hysterics were at times the subjects of experiments with so-called dermographism, where letters or symbols were traced onto their skin by doctors and left raised marks. The demonic was a favourite subject when choosing what to trace, no doubt reflecting the close connection believed to exist between witchcraft and hysteria. Photo from T. Barthélémy, *Etude sur le dermographisme* (1893).

Asti Hustvedt stresses that Charcot's discourse on hysteria is 'permeated by an atmosphere of the occult and supernatural' and 'borrows heavily from the vocabularies of religion and demonology'. Thus, he 'ultimately appropriates the very demonology he is debunking, and thereby reintroduces Satan into hysteria'. Charcot's personal aesthetic preferences no doubt played a part in this. His office, all its walls and furnishings, were painted black, and engravings of scenes of demonic possession were displayed on the walls. Further, there are several examples of how Charcot's rhetoric of rationalism and science at times gave way to a love of melodramatic performance, which opened the gates to a more 'occult' understanding of the pathological phenomena at hand. A favourite experiment of his during the public lectures was suggesting to a hysteric patient chosen for this purpose that a card from a completely blank deck had a specific image on it. He proceeded to mark the card on the back, reshuffled the deck and the patient would then amazingly be

capable of identifying this very card even though nothing distinguished it from the others.

Being a positivist and rationalist, he, of course, did not formally classify things like this as "occult", but some of the women participating in activities of this type started claiming actual powers of extrasensory perception—seeing themselves as a sort of latter-day "witches" with supernatural powers, as it were. Some spectators probably also had a hard time understanding experiments of this sort as non-supernatural. Further, the process of identifying a hysteric could be startlingly similar to methods used for recognizing a witch in early modern times. Both involved the "suspect" being stripped naked and pricked with pins, in order to find spots insensitive to pain. According to Hustvedt, the combined effect of all these things was that Charcot's 'science of hysteria breathed new life into age-old ideas of feminine mystery and demonism'.[64] The pathologizing view of witches taken by Charcot and his cohorts strongly influenced the writings of medical men in other countries as well. Simultaneously, the air of mystery and the demonic he bestowed upon woman also became part of the medical discourse across Europe.[65]

'THE SHRIEKING SISTERHOOD': FEMINISTS AS HYSTERICAL WITCHES

As Elaine Showalter has demonstrated, hysteria (and certain other nervous disorders) in female patients was linked by physicians not only to historical witches but also to the phenomenon of contemporary women's pursuit of new opportunities for work and education. Men of medicine were not alone in proposing the latter connection, and hysteria was strongly associated with organized feminism by critics of this political movement.[66] The British anti-feminist Eliza Lynn Linton (1822–1898), for example, attacked suffragettes in the 1870s and 1880s by slandering them as hysterics and denigrating them as 'the shrieking sisterhood'.[67] Philosopher and social critic Otto Weininger, in his bestseller *Geschlecht und Charakter* ('Sex and Character', 1903), identified ambitious women as typical examples of individuals suffering from the hysterical malady.[68] Moreover, several leading medical authorities remarked on the hysterics' tendency to take liberties with the gendered rules of communication. Richet, for example, mentions that they 'talk with men as if they were of the same sex', clearly not something he approves of.[69] On the authority of the medical men, hysterics were, as Martha Noel Evans puts it,

'wilful, troublemaking, unladylike, virile creatures whose attempts at self-assertion were interpreted as resistance to the male authorities taking care of them'.[70] The hysteric thus came to be figured as a female who denied the sovereignty of men, much like feminists. Showalter has further suggested that hysteria in itself can in fact be seen as a form of protest against patriarchal constraints. At least temporarily, the hysteric could refuse the part of the self-sacrificing daughter or wife, and instead demand service and attention. Indeed, this raised concern among physicians that female hysterics were very much enjoying being released from their domestic chores and duties in the conjugal bed. An 'unnatural' desire for privacy and independence was typical of such patients, and the physicians worried about becoming accomplices to their deviance from societal mores.[71]

The conclusion Showalter reaches is that hysteria was, however, not a very empowering tactic for discontented women to employ, but 'at best a private, ineffectual response to the frustrations of women's lives'.[72] Be that as it may, the interesting thing here is that a striving for female emancipation—on an individual or collective level—was intimately connected to hysteria in both medical literature and anti-feminist propaganda, and that the malady itself at times seems to have functioned as a strategy (admittedly unproductive in the long run) to elude the pressures of patriarchy. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that the view of hysterics (who, according to medical theories, were the modern equivalents of witches) as rebels against male power may have been further strengthened by Charcot and his disciples' reading of Michelet's *La Sorcière*, which they quoted in their own works.[73]

There existed, then, strong ties between hysteria and feminism in contemporary discourse. If we relate this to the medical experts who held that witches should be understood as hysterics, it becomes clear that hysteria, feminism, and witchcraft were indirectly conflated to an extent.[74] Further strengthening this tendency to conflation, anti-feminists were fond of slandering suffragettes not only by painting them as hysterical but also by claiming a resemblance between them and witches.

One example of this is displayed in the writings of the Latvian author Laura Marholm (Laura Mohr, 1854–1928). Highly independent and intellectually gifted, Marholm paradoxically (even if this was not uncommon) professed an anti-feminism of sorts. This made her an influential name in the debate surrounding gender roles both in Scandinavia and Germany in the 1890s.[75] She had a highly negative view of the witch, expressed in her book *Till*

kvinnans psykologi ('On the Psychology of Woman', 1897, also published in German later the same year), where the figure is used to demonize suffragettes. Marholm sees women's value as located primarily in motherhood and rejects their struggles for equal opportunities in wordings like 'woman's emancipation—meaning woman's despair at herself as woman'.[76] She rhetorically asks '[w]hat good does it do me that I . . . write the best of books … if I have sickly children?'[77]

In Marholm's opinion, the reason why women are enticed to such drastic acts as proclaiming themselves witches or suffragettes is an appetite for emotional sensations, which in males instead finds a healthy expression in artistic creativity. The witch, then, is basically the same unsound creature as the feminist:

> The same need for stimulation in women which three centuries ago caused them to denounce each other as witches and confess themselves to be witches nowadays causes them to enter the struggle for women's liberation. The one like the other is a transferal of emotional drives, which have been averted from their central point.[78]

The ultimate point of Marholm's parallel is to denigrate the struggle for female emancipation as unhealthy and twisted. The bringing together of witches with feminism—as in Marholm's book—is characteristic of the time and can be found both among feminists and anti-feminists. This could take the form of serious argumentation in polemical works like that by Marholm, but also appeared in the realm of satire. For example, there are several German caricatures, one published the same year as Marholm's book, that show female bicyclists—a phenomenon held to be one of the foremost symbols of female emancipation, since riding a bicycle would usually be done wearing trousers rather than a skirt—to be a modern-day development of the witches' broomstick ride to the sabbath (figure 6.4).[79] In 1894, the English ladies' magazine *Woman* held a competition where housewives were asked to define the New Woman in as witty a manner as possible. One of the winning contributions stated that '[m]odern Woman has projected on the mists of fancy a shadow of her own personality, which, like some Brocken [the mountain where the witches' sabbath in Goethe's *Faust* takes place] spectre, looms before her imagination, distorted, monstrous, but, fortunately, phantasmal.'[80] Since the motif of the witch, like Satan, had become a partly floating signifier, depictions often became double-edged and were filled to the brim with conflicting resonances. Anti-feminists were certainly not the only ones to

seize on the image of witches as feminists. A prominent example of the appropriation of the figure for the cause of women's rights can be found in texts written by an influential suffragette and Theosophist in the United States: Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826–1898).

Unglaubliche Entwicklung.
Warum die jungen Radlerinnen
Bezaubern und ſo leicht entflammen?
Der Grund iſt einfach, weil die Mädchen,
Wie man hier ſieht — von Hexen ſtammen.

FIGURE 6.4 *Unglaubliche Entwicklung*. German 1897 caricature of female bicyclists as witches.

'A SACRIFICE AND A PRAYER MORE HOLY': MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE'S FEMINIST WITCH CULT

Gage grew up in the small town of Cicero, New York. She was tutored by her father in subjects like physiology and Greek to a level advanced for a young

girl of her time. Studies at the Clinton Liberal Institute in New York followed, but she did not embark on the medical career her father had envisioned. Early on, she became devoted to the ideals of abolitionism and women's suffrage, which her physician father also advocated. In 1845, she married. The couple had five children and enjoyed a decent income from the dry goods store they ran in Fayetteville, New York. Her husband was supportive of her dedication to suffrage work, and she attended meetings, conventions, and became part of a network of feminists. When the National Woman Suffrage Association was founded in 1860, she served on its advisory council. Gage was also among those who gave their support when Victoria Woodhull attempted to form a political party and run for president in 1872. Further, as the reader will recall from chapter 4, she was one of the contributors to *The Woman's Bible* in 1895.

For a long time, Gage had been agitated by the role she felt all major churches had played in the subjection of woman. At age 52, in 1878, Gage held her first longer public speech at a convention for freethinkers, attacking Christianity and claiming it 'is based upon the fact of woman servitude'. Especially the attitude towards Eve, a woman harshly punished for her desire for knowledge by being permanently subordinated to her husband, indicated this, she asserted. Suffragettes should therefore categorically reject any ideas of Christianity as an ally in their struggle. This uncompromising stance made her somewhat marginalized in feminist circles, since many of those with the same goals as she were devout Christians. Yet, a fairly great number of freethinkers, anarchists, and secularists found her arguments persuasive, and together they founded the Women's National Liberal Union in 1890. Until her death in 1898 Gage remained president of this organization.[81] Like quite a few radical feminists, Gage was also an avid reader of Blavatsky. As we will see, she drew on Theosophical writings in her anticlerical polemics and speculations concerning witches.

As part of her fight against the negative influence of Christianity, Gage wrote the book *Woman, Church and State: A Historical Account of the Status of Woman through the Christian Ages, with Reminiscences of the Matriarchate* in 1893, where she among other things presents her analysis of the persecutions of witches. She had outlined her opinions in this question already in a chapter with the same name that she contributed to the pivotal work *History of Woman Suffrage*, a collaborative effort published in 1881. The leading feminist Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906), who was also part of

the project, did not want to include Gage's chapter at first, as she felt it did not fit the focus of the book.[82] She may also have been worried by its harshly anti-Christian tone. The need to create the Liberal Union nine years later arose because Anthony had decided to merge the Suffrage Association with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Gage, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, protested, as she feared it would entail a conservative "infiltration" of the suffrage movement.[83] After the split, she remained unflinching in her critique of organized religion. In her speech at the Liberal Union convention in Washington, DC, in 1890, Gage stated that 'in order to secure victory for woman we must unfetter the minds of men from religious bondage'.[84] In a document drafted at the founding of this organization, its objects are listed. Number three is: 'To show that the real foundation of the Church is the doctrine of woman's inferiority by reason of her original sin—a doctrine which we denounce as false in science and its foundation a theological myth.'[85] Then follows a number of resolutions, such as the following two:

> That every Church is the enemy of liberty and progress and the chief means of enslaving woman's conscience and reason, and therefore as the first and most necessary step towards her emancipation we should free her from the bondage of the Church.
>
> . . .
>
> That Christianity is false and its foundation a myth which every discovery in science shows to be as baseless as its former belief that the earth was flat.[86]

True to these sentiments, *Woman, Church and State* is a full-on attack on Christianity, which in Gage's opinion has attempted to limit women's freedom from its very beginning. According to her, the church (a term which should here be taken to mean organized mainstream Christianity in general) is the most important of the tools of 'patriarchism' (her word for what later feminists would call patriarchy) in its oppression of the female sex. Her argumentation in the lengthy chapter (seventy-seven pages) 'Witchcraft' is primarily based on Michelet's *La Sorcière*, which she references in six of her footnotes. Additionally, the Theosophist Gage has been inspired by esoteric thinkers like Éliphas Lévi in a way that would have been quite foreign to Michelet. She also utilizes primary sources like the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Gage emphasizes that the victims of the witch persecutions were practically all women and substantiates this using, among other things, the claims in the *Malleus* concerning why most witches are female.[87] Moreover, she calls

attention to how Eve's supposed sin was held to be the ultimate reason why her daughters are especially prone to compacts with Satan.[88]

Like Michelet, Gage views the witch as an exceedingly eminent figure. 'We have abundant proof', she writes, 'that the so-called "witch" was among the most profoundly scientific persons of the age.' However, Gage's understanding of what the witch had mastered is quite different from that in *La Sorcière*, where she was lauded as a precursor of modern medicine and conventional natural science. While Gage also sees her as a healer, she adds to this a perception of the witch as a pioneer of esoteric wisdom, claiming she had come upon 'that mysterious hidden knowledge of the church which it regarded as among its most potent methods of controlling mankind', namely the magic practised by 'church, popes, and prelates of every degree'.[89] It seems probable that Gage here relies on Blavatsky's discussion of witchcraft and magic in relation to the Catholic Church in *Isis Unveiled*, which presents similar arguments.[90] What was called magic when men used it, Gage explains, was designated witchcraft when wielded by women.[91] It is hence not only on a symbolic level that Gage views witches as powerful women and usurpers of knowledge males would have preferred to keep for themselves. Being a believing occultist, she highlights the occult proficiency she claims witches possessed as one reason why contemporary feminists should see them as inspiring ancestresses.

Gage also details Lévi's thoughts on how will can control the 'astral light' (the cosmic fluidum at times identified with Lucifer by Lévi) and concludes that the strengthening of personal will is hence the most important goal in human evolution. The soul has a completely natural tendency to move beyond the body, and it can be trained in doing so consciously, which 'will give its possessor power to work magic'. The most prominent feature of the church has always been its stifling of mankind developing its will, the reason being that '[u]nder WILL, man decides for himself, escaping from all control that hinders his personal development'. Magic, she explicates, simply entails knowledge about the effects of certain natural but generally unknown laws, 'such as are shown in the electrical appliances of the day, which a few centuries since would have been termed witchcraft'.[92] Gage's understanding of magic, then, is quite similar to that in many contemporary texts by occultists, who used (pseudo-)science as a legitimating strategy in their discourse or argued that the roots of "proper" science made it indebted to esotericism.[93]

Let us dwell a moment longer on Gage's explanations concerning the special powers witches supposedly possessed. The ability to fly, swim in spite of being thrown in the water with hands and feet tied, intuitively understand the effects of all vegetabilic and mineral substances, heal by the laying on of hands or entering a cataleptic state insensitive to pain when being tortured—all these things, Gage claims, can be explained through the theory of 'Pacinian corpuscles' as presented by the Italian physician Filippo Pacini (1812–1883) in the 1830s and 1840s. These are to be found primarily in the sensitive areas of the hands and feet, and are 'the instrument for that peculiar vital energy, known more or less to all students as Animal Magnetism'.[94] Witches were individuals with an uncommon amount of such Pacinian corpuscles, which gave them all the aforementioned miraculous abilities. It is Gage's hope that the world—through the discoveries of individuals like Pacini, Luigi Galvani, Thomas Edison, and Nikola Tesla—is about to reach an understanding of 'the peculiar nerve action of the witch period, when a holacaust [*sic*] of women were sacrificed, victims of the ignorance and barbarity of the church'.[95] According to Gage, nine million, mostly women, were executed for the crime of witchcraft from 1484 onwards.[96] She was probably the first person to extensively analyse the persecutions of witches as a misogynist genocide. For example, Blavatsky had spoken of it as a holocaust, but focused on the horrible fact that children were burned at the stake. The general anticlerical tone in the discussion of the persecutions closely approximates Blavatsky's, but Gage sets the events in a feminist analytical framework that is distinctly her own.[97]

With considerable enthusiasm and sympathy, Gage sketches a picture of the witch as a wise woman. Using Max Müller and others for support (in fact, though, these references appear to have been derived from a secondary source, Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*), she demonstrates the word to have its roots in the term for *wise* in various languages.[98] The witch, she submits, was not only the first chemist but also the first homeopath, anticipating this modern system of medicine by centuries.[99] When detailing the witch's role as healer, Gage draws on Michelet and details the popular opinion that she had gained these skills 'through diabolical agency'. Even the persons whom she cured were, according to Gage, ready to attest their belief in the healer's debt of gratitude to Satan for her insight in the art of medicine. The idea that 'knowledge had first been introduced to the world through woman's obedience to the devil' formed the basis of this belief.[100] In this context, we

also find a discussion of the church's view of the pains of childbirth being a punishment for Eve's transgression, which brought about the conviction that any attempt to alleviate them was proof of being in league with Satan.[101] Concurring with Michelet, Gage's view is that there was some truth to the notion of such an alliance, since witches really were members of a Satanic cult. This cult was the product of the oppression of the populace by the church and the feudal lords in tandem, which had shown that the God of Christianity was no friend to the lowborn, or to women. From the anger at these injustices

> grew the sacrifice of the 'Black Mass' with women as officiating priestess, in which rites of the church were travestied in solemn mockery, and defiance cast at that heaven which permitted the priest and the lord alike to trample upon all the sacred rights of womanhood, in the name of religion and law.[102]

At these rites, 'in defiance of that God to whom the serfs under church teaching ascribed all their wrongs', the officiating priestess is designated '[t]he Devil's bride'.[103] Here Gage follows Michelet's description in minute detail but emphasizes the feminist tendencies in his text when she claims that the priest and the lord tyrannized not only the serfs as a social class but also the female sex at large. Gage is obviously fascinated by Michelet's notion of the Black Mass as a means of 'redeeming Eve, damned by Christianity', and she in particular dwells on how a woman was in charge at this ritual and sacralized her own body—deemed unclean by the church—by using it as the altar.[104] Since Gage admires the persecuted witch and loathes the patriarchal oppression of the church and the lord (who have trampled 'upon all the sacred rights of womanhood'), she here takes an explicitly sympathetic view of the Satanism that mocks and defies the God who gives his support to this power structure (figure 6.5). She asserts, for example, that '[w]e can but regard this sacrifice as the most acceptable offering made in that day of moral degradation; a sacrifice and a prayer more holy than all the ceremonials of the church'.[105]

The main part of the chapter is dedicated to retelling horrible tales of how completely innocent women were tortured and executed for witchcraft. This contrasts strangely with the witches' sabbaths she also describes. If there in fact really existed a secret cult of witches (of a Satanic feminist variety casting defiance at heaven at that), it appears odd that she provides no documentation of cases where its members have been arrested and interrogated. Further, all the female victims we meet in her text seem to lack

the amazing powers resulting from a great amount of Pacinian corpuscles and appear not to have participated in the clandestine gatherings where womanhood was celebrated in the context of a Satanic liturgy. This is hardly surprising, since her understanding of the anti-patriarchal Satanism of the noble witch with mysterious abilities is so obviously an ideological concept, which she did not attempt to ground in historical research or scholarly secondary sources aside from Michelet. Gage's conception of witches should be seen as part political polemic and part esoteric belief. A political motivation also underpins her outright repudiation of the idea, so widespread at the time, that witches were simply hysterical.[106] Since she paints the witch as a proto-suffragette, it is easy to understand why this point was important for her to make. Otherwise she and her fellow feminists might have been taken as unbalanced hysteria patients, too.

FIGURE 6.5 Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826–1898), the American suffragette who described the alleged Black Masses of early modern witches as a rite of 'defiance cast at that heaven which permitted the priest and the lord alike to trample upon all the sacred rights of womanhood'.

The reception of *Woman, Church and State* was varied. Anthony Comstock, a leading guardian of public morality who held the office of US Postal Inspector, was outraged. He threatened to sue if attempts were made to place this dangerous work in schools or libraries (whether this threat was effective is not known). Susan B. Anthony refused to recognize it, as she felt Gage had strayed from the primary goal of woman suffrage in her focus on 'church work'. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was less dismissive. As we saw in chapter 4, she too had developed a critical attitude towards Christianity leading to her collaboration with Gage and others on *The Woman's Bible*, which was published two years later.[107] The lauding of supposed medieval Satanic feminism in *Woman, Church and State* is, as mentioned, present in

Gage's contribution to the 1881 *History of Woman Suffrage* as well. The latter was a very widely disseminated volume, which went through several editions, so her ideas certainly would have reached a considerable audience via this route.[108] As for her own book, it became quite popular in the American anarchist movement, which was at its height at this time, and it remained in print for twenty-four years. Stacey Ann White has observed the parallels between Gage's views and those of individualist anarchists like Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939), for example, pertaining to the basic idea of a powerful state aided by the church denying individuals their liberties in order to safeguard the interests of a ruling elite.[109] We can here note that in 1883 Tucker translated Bakunin's *Dieu et l'état*, the work in which the Russian radical makes prominent use of Satan as a symbol of liberation. Although it is unclear if Gage affiliated officially with anarchists, it is safe to say they were fellow travellers in a sense, and that her thinking shows considerable overlap with this ideology. She was likely at least aware of it, since many of those she associated with would have moved freely between the anarchist and suffragette milieux. The use of Satanism as a way of attacking Christianity in works by anarchists like Bakunin may hence also have been a factor in Gage's sympathy for Michelet-inspired feminist Black Masses.

Given her preoccupation with Theosophy, Blavatsky's Luciferianism is also a possible ingredient to take into account, even if the figure of the Devil as such is not brought to the fore in Gage's texts (only indirectly, in the positive description of the cult of Satan). As in the case of *The Woman's Bible*, I believe earlier scholarship has clearly overlooked an important element for a full understanding of Gage's texts by neglecting Theosophy. Aside from the examples of influence from Blavatsky that I have suggested, elsewhere in the chapter Gage in fact provides footnotes to *Isis Unveiled* and an article from the Theosophical journal *Lucifer*.[110]

'CALL FOR ME THE FIENDS FROM HELL': CHARLES LELAND'S BIBLE OF WITCHCRAFT

Thus far, most of the authors we have considered treated witchcraft primarily as a historical phenomenon, albeit—in the argumentation of, for example, Michelet and Gage—with implications for the present. In *Aradia; or, the Gospel of the Witches* (1899), the American journalist and amateur folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903) instead chooses to describe European witchcraft as a living tradition and even provides the witches' hymns and

ritual texts. A connection between witches, Lucifer, and feminism occupies a prominent position in this intriguing work. The book was the result of Leland's decision, at age 62, to move to Italy in order to study local folk traditions in the field.[111] According to Leland, the Italian witch, unlike her counterparts elsewhere in the world, usually comes from a family in which her craft has been passed down for several generations, with lineages that in some cases stretch all the way back to Roman or Etruscan times.[112] This tradition has been kept alive in utmost secrecy, which it has in Leland's opinion benefited from, since 'witchcraft, like the truffle, grows best and has its raciest flavour when most deeply hidden'.[113] Leland claims he became acquainted with a witch by the name of Maddalena in 1886, who helped him gather material on Italian witchcraft. After strenuous efforts she got hold of (or rather compiled) the 'gospel' which the book presents. This was in turn derived from oral sources rather than texts.[114] It is thus not a fixed and stable 'witches' bible' that is being presented, but a compilation of a fragmented and heterogeneous tradition.

Several later scholars have been sceptical towards the data Leland puts forward in *Aradia*. Some, like Jeffrey Burton Russell, think only small pieces of it are actual folklore, with the greater part being pure fabrication.[115] Indeed, Leland was known as something of a raconteur.[116] Some experts have deemed parts of the beliefs recorded in it to be in accordance with existing, documented elements of Italian folk culture.[117] The author of an early biography of Leland, his niece Elizabeth Pennell, mentions having perused a great number of letters and manuscripts by Maddalena's hand, which have, however, gone missing since then (only one letter is preserved today). Further, Maddalena appears in a photograph in Leland's biography and is referred to in various letters of his. Evidently, if Leland invented everything about his book (including the informant), it was a very elaborate hoax. There is, of course, another option: that Maddalena was making things up to please her American patron, who we know was paying her for the information.[118] The answer to this riddle is not of central importance here.[119] The most interesting thing about *Aradia* is that it helped spread the notion of the witch as a rebel against social oppression, a sort of feminist, and a representative of female power. This view of the figure appears mostly in Leland's own comments to the material, rather than in the portions of the book supposedly provided to him by Maddalena. The manner in which to approach this dimension of the

work is thus little affected by the veracity, or lack thereof, of the description of Italian witchcraft.

However, this matter has some relevance for how we can interpret the fact that Leland's witches are depicted in the 'gospel' sections as closely connected to Lucifer, if not explicit Satanists to the extent that Michelet's counterparts are. It is indisputable that Satanic motifs are quite prominent in the book (as will be discussed, it seems this aspect of the material bothers Leland slightly). In chapter 1, it is declared that:

> This is the Gospel (*Vangelo*) of the Witches:
>
> DIANA greatly loved her brother LUCIFER, the god of the Sun and of the Moon, the god of Light (*Splendor*), who was so proud of his beauty, and for his pride was driven from Paradise.
>
> DIANA had by her brother a daughter, to whom they gave the name of ARADIA [*i.e.* Herodias].[120]

In the second chapter, we are given a more detailed version of what Leland claims is the creation myth of the witches. Diana existed before creation itself, and Lucifer, 'her brother and son, herself and her other half', emanated from her. Together they descended to the Earth, where Diana taught 'magic and sorcery, whence came witches and fairies and goblins'. She assumed the shape of a cat and thus gained access to her brother's bed, where she in the dark of the night transformed back into a woman and seduced him. Her brother was much angered by this, but was beseeched by a spell she now sang. Aradia, the goddess of the witches, was born from this union.[121]

Along with Lucifer, the witches' pantheon also contains other biblical villains and figures from demonology. For instance, another name used for Aradia is Herodias, according to medieval sources the name of the leader of the so-called Wild Hunt but ultimately derived from the wicked queen in the New Testament who brings about the execution of John the Baptist (Mark 6:16–28; Matt. 14:3–11).[122] Leland further notes that 'Pipernus and other writers' have identified this figure as being identical with the Jewish demoness Lilith.[123] Another example is the invocation of Cain at the meal at the witches' sabbath. He is here forced to obey the will of the witch: 'And unless thou grantest this, / May'st thou ne'er know peace or bliss!'[124] This is quite similar to how medieval ritual magicians coerced demons to obey them in the name of God and his archangels.[125] Somewhat surprisingly, the summoning of Aradia has a similar character. She too is urged to do as

commanded, lest she 'in future know no peace nor joy'.[126] The first words of this summoning refer to her being the daughter of Lucifer:

> Thou who art daughter unto him who was
> Most evil of all spirits, who of old
> Once reigned in hell when driven away from heaven,
> Who by his sister did thy sire become,
> But as thy mother did repent her fault,
> And wished to mate thee to a spirit who
> Should be benevolent,
> And not malevolent![127]

Given the phrasing in the second and third line there can be little doubt this is the Lucifer of Christianity, and not a figure completely cut loose from that context. This connection is also present, but less directly, when Diana is summoned in wordings making her seem like a sort of female Satan, the Queen of Hell as well as the protector of disadvantaged and nominally evil men and women:

> Great Diana! Thou
> Who art the queen of heaven and of earth,
> And of the infernal lands—yea, thou who art
> Protectress of all men unfortunate,
> Of thieves and murderers, and of women too
> Who lead an evil life, and yet hast known
> That their nature was not evil, thou, Diana,
> Hast still conferred on them some joy in life.[128]

Another spell, where it is said that Diana 'shalt call for me the fiends from hell', also makes her appear directly aligned with Satanic forces.[129] Attempting to distance himself from the implications of this, Leland states that

> a reviewer has reproached me with exaggerating the degree to which *diabolism*—introduced by the Church since 1500—is deficient in Italy. But in fact, among the higher class of witches, or in their traditions, it is hardly to be found at all. In Christian diabolism the witch never dares to threaten Satan or God, or any of the Trinity or angels, for the whole system is based on the conception of a Church and of obedience.[130]

It is a bit unclear what Leland means by 'diabolism', but it seems to denote submission to Satan. Diabolism thus cannot be found here, since the Italian witches speak commandingly and compellingly to their deities. This makes them very different from Satanists, he argues: 'No one ever heard of a Satanic witch invoking or threatening the Trinity, or Christ or even the angels or saints. In fact, they cannot even *compel* the devil or his imps to obey—they work entirely by his good-will as slaves.'[131] Moreover, he says, the outcasts of Italian society worship Diana since time immemorial, while 'the alleged adoration of Satan was a far later invention of the Church, and it has never really found a leading place in Italian witchcraft to this day'.[132] Interestingly, editorial comments in the 1998 critical edition of *Aradia* suggest Leland may have actively censored some Satanic subject matter in the material Maddalena handed him.[133] Yet, in spite of Leland's efforts to downplay this dimension, his witches are closely tied to Lucifer and a Diana pictured as the Queen of Hell. Slaves to darkness or not, the powers they summon are demonic in some sense. According to Leland, witches were historically people oppressed by feudal lords 'avenging themselves in every way, and holding orgies to *Diana* which the Church represented as being the worship of Satan'.[134] Yet, Diana as Leland presents her is intimately connected with Lucifer, the fallen angel, and she herself seems decidedly demonic, something he only very faintly tries to explain away as a later demonization by the church. The cult he depicts therefore comes across as highly similar to Michelet's Satanic proto-socialism.

As will presently be considered, Leland's witch cult also shares some of the feminist features of Michelet's work. Being a form of (at least indirect) Satanic feminism, then, the witchcraft Leland describes fits well with the discourse on the theme of Lucifer as the liberator of woman floating around at the time.[135] Leland's aforementioned connecting of Aradia and Lilith could also be taken as an indication of this. As described in chapter 2, Lilith had by this time started to become something of a feminist symbol. Her explicit connection to Satan was typically retained in this context. Although Leland was less than keen on this demonic link, it would still have reinforced the Satanic aspects of his book from an intertextual perspective.[136] This applies to Lilith's feminist connotations as well, and, when combined, the overlap with Satanic feminism. Leland probably called attention to the connection between the witches' goddess and Lilith with full awareness of this (it appears especially likely he would have read Moncure Conway's

Demonology and Devil-lore, where the demoness is described as the first propagator of women's liberation).[137] There are also completely explicit statements in *Aradia* showing that he perceived a connection between feminism and witchcraft, and was more or less positive towards women gaining more power. We will now take a closer look at these declarations.

'WOMAN AS THE FULLY EQUAL, WHICH MEANS THE SUPERIOR SEX': FEMINISM IN *ARADIA*

In an earlier work of his, Leland briefly discusses Michelet's *La Sorcière*, and it seems quite clear that the French historian influenced *Aradia*.[138] This can be seen, for example, in the passages mentioning how '[i]n those days … the rich made slaves of all the poor'.[139] The cult Leland details is thus that of 'rebels, outcasts, and all the discontented, who adopted witchcraft or sorcery for a religion'.[140] According to Leland's closing comments, it is also a feminist cult (women being among the discontented in a patriarchal society). His book should hence, he says, be read by all with an interest in the 'subject of woman's influence and capacity'.[141] He asserts that '[w]henever in history there is a period of radical intellectual rebellion against long-established conservatism, hierarchy, and the like, there is always an effort to regard Woman as the fully equal, which means the superior sex'.[142] Witchcraft should obviously be counted to this category of intellectual rebellions. It is, in other words, like the cult depicted by Michelet, a religion of rebellion (or of resistance) in Bruce Lincoln's sense. In fact, Leland himself uses the term *counter-religion* to describe it.[143]

Leland assures the reader that 'with every new rebellion, every fresh outburst or *debâcle* or wild inundation and bursting over the barriers, humanity and woman gain something, that is to say, their just dues or rights'.[144] However, Leland expresses his misgivings concerning the overemphasis on women's greatness sometimes seen in his own era and opines that 'progress in this respect means not a *conflict* of the male and female principle … but a gradual ascertaining of true ability and adjustment of relations or co-ordination of powers—in doing which on a scientific basis all conflict ceases'.[145] His witches seem quite prone to indulge in violent conflict with their perceived oppressors (though this struggle is not here specified as one between men and women). For example, when Diana tells Aradia that she

shall descend to the Earth and become a teacher to mortal women and men, her instructions are as follows:

> And thou shalt teach the art of poisoning,
> Of poisoning those who are great lords of all;
> Yea, thou shalt make them die in their palaces;
> And thou shalt bind the oppressor's soul (with power);
> And when ye find a peasant who is rich,
> Then ye shall teach the witch, your pupil, how
> To ruin all his crops with tempests dire,
> With lightning and with thunder (terrible),
> And with the hail and wind
> . . .
> And when a priest shall do you injury
> By his benedictions, ye shall do to him
> Double the harm, and do it in the name
> Of me, *Diana*, Queen of witches all!
>
> And when the priests or the nobility
> Shall say to you that you should put your faith
> In the father, Son, and Mary, then reply:
> 'Your God, the Father, and Maria are
> Three devils
> . . .
> 'For the true God the Father is not yours;
> For I have come to sweep away the bad,
> The men of evil, all will I destroy!'[146]

As in the case of Michelet, Leland's own sympathies seem to lie with the downtrodden, here represented by the witches. Leland himself was an active participant in the 1848 revolution in France, and thus a practising revolutionary in a way that his French predecessor in the field of witchcraft studies never was.[147] This has lead Ronald Hutton to suggest that *Aradia* was written 'to mirror Leland's own (radical) political beliefs', something that Chas S. Clifton has objected strongly to, arguing that Leland was no radical at all.[148] It seems difficult to reach any firm conclusions regarding Leland's politics, and this goes for his stance in the question of female emancipation as

well. Robert Mathiesen, drawing on several other books by Leland, asserts that he appears 'to have come to hold strong views on the equality of men and women which were unusual in his age'.[149] Leland does not, however, seem to have been known as a feminist activist, even if the situation of women had been something of a preoccupation not only in his books but also in his early journalism.[150] Regardless, as we have seen, such tendencies are clearly present in *Aradia*, at least a variety of them where he envisions the sexes as complementary but equal and acknowledges an oppression of women that he views as regrettable. Marion Gibson poses the question of whether Leland hoped to change society by publicizing a religion centred on women and freedom.[151] Due to a lack of documentation, this query must remain unanswered, although an affirmative answer appears quite plausible. *Aradia* may not have fulfilled such possible hopes of societal change, but at least went on to influence several other authors. It can be considered a minor if controversial classic in the field and helped cement the view of historical witchcraft as a form of feminism (figure 6.6).[152]

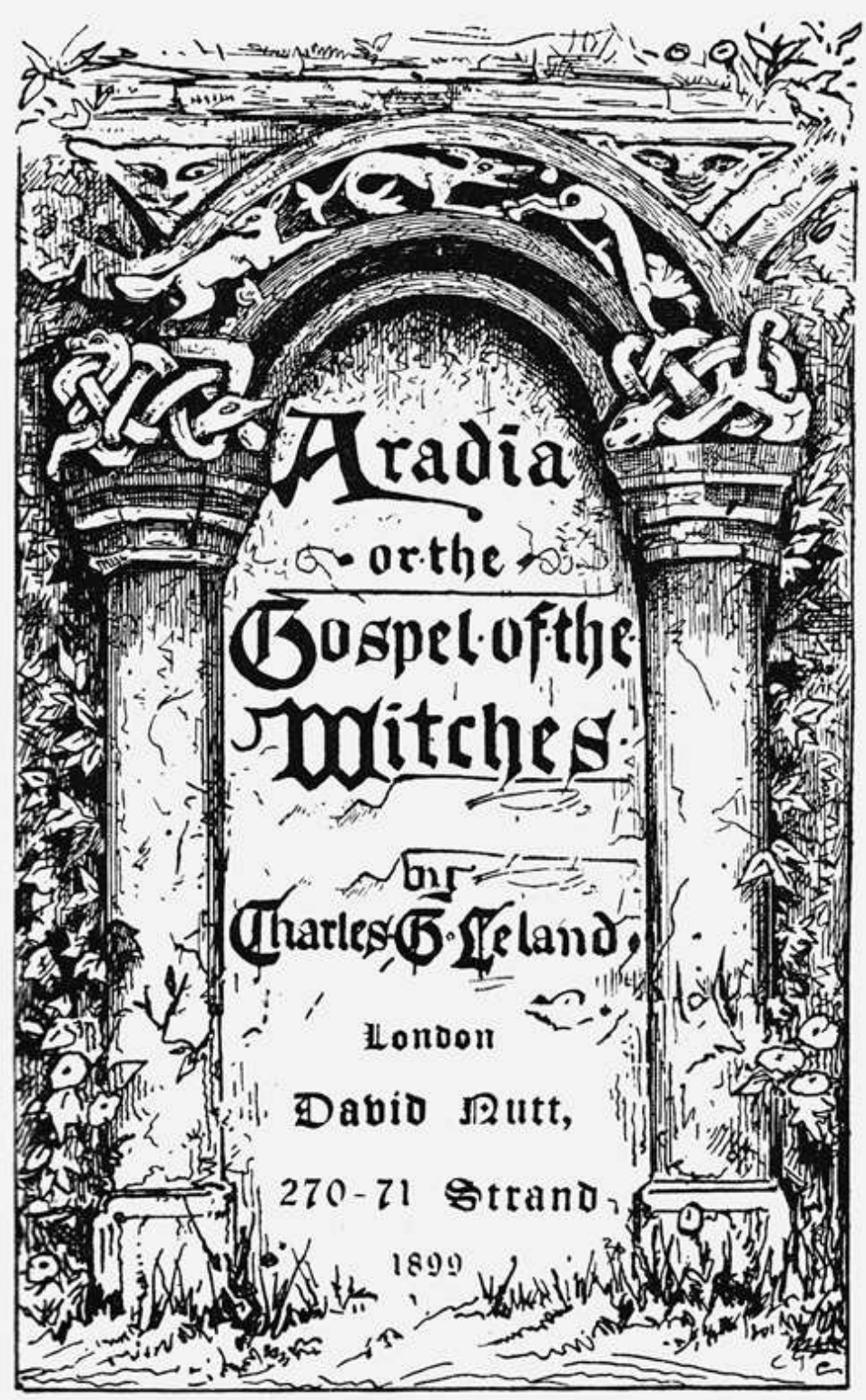

FIGURE 6.6 Frontispiece of *Aradia: or the Gospel of the Witches* (1899), in which amateur folklorist Charles Leland describes witchcraft as an intellectual rebellion involving 'an effort to regard Woman as the fully equal, which means superior sex'.

Like Gage, Leland held a long-standing interest in esotericism. He had read the original Latin version of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (1531–1533) before turning eighteen, spent most of his time while studying at Princeton immersing himself in Neo-Platonic philosophy, theurgy, and Hermetic writings and had been friends with Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (who later co-founded the Theosophical Society) ever since the Civil War.[153] His enthusiasm for these matters even prompted him to, more or less earnestly, attempt to practise the rituals described in *Aradia*, such as those used to invoke helpful spirits.[154] The witchcraft he wrote of was supposedly a living tradition, and his book accordingly emphasizes the continuity between olden days' witchcraft and current phenomena (even those far removed from Italian folk culture) to a greater extent than Michelet did. The witch, Leland writes, was 'once a real factor or great power in rebellious social life, and to this very day—as most novels bear witness—it is recognised that there is something uncanny, mysterious, and incomprehensible in woman, which neither she herself nor man can explain'. The mention of novels can be seen as a reference to the numerous depictions of mysterious and dangerous women in contemporary literature (see chapter 7). Leland then adds: 'For every woman is at heart a witch.'[155] A female author with a similar view of her sex was the British globetrotter who published under the pseudonym George Egerton, to whom we shall now turn.

'YOU WITCH WOMAN!': GEORGE EGERTON'S METAPHORICAL NEW WOMAN WITCHES

Egerton, whose real name was Mary Chavelita Dunne (1859–1945), uses the figure of the witch in a highly interesting way in her collections of short stories *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894).[156] *Keynotes* received many positive reviews when it was published and became one of the most talked-about books of the decade in England.[157] In only a year it sold 6,000 copies, which was a fairly impressive amount for its time (at least for a somewhat avant-garde book). Five years later, it had gone through eight editions and had been translated into seven languages.[158] The cover was decorated with a picture by the Decadent artist Aubrey Beardsley in his typical style (figure 6.7). The short stories in *Keynotes*, like those in *Discords*, are more akin to little sketches than fully realized tales. The characters often remain nameless and are vague stereotypes rather than realistic portraits with any psychological depth worth mentioning. In these two collections, men

frequently liken Egerton's heroines to witches. For example, in 'An Empty Frame' the protagonist is called '[y]ou witch with a soul of clean white fire' in a letter where a man asks her to '[b]e with me, work with me, share with me, live with me, my equal as a creature; above me as my queen of women!'[159] The witch thus becomes an image of female power, and a metaphor for the type of creative woman who is men's equal in all respects.[160]

The witch metaphor is most prominent in Egerton's most famous and at the time extremely controversial short story, 'A Cross Line' from *Keynotes*. The tale depicts a married woman walking in the forest who by chance encounters a man out fishing. They meet a number of times, and he falls in love with her. Her mysteriousness and originality (among other things, she has masculine interests like fishing) make him describe her as a witch on several occasions. Her husband also views her as a diabolical figure. 'You are a queer little devil!', he tells her, and she answers by explaining that she wishes she were a man, since she would then 'go on a jolly old spree!' (possibly a way of saying she would take lovers).[161] She complains to her husband: 'Perhaps if you were badder and I were gooder we'd meet halfway. *You* are an awfully good chap; it's just men like you *send women like me to the devil*!'[162] The unconventional wife thinks to herself about how men have misunderstood her sex:

> They have all overlooked the eternal wildness, the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman. Deep in through ages of convention this primeval trait burns, an untameable quantity that may be concealed but is never eradicated by culture—*the keynote of woman's witchcraft and woman's strength*.[163]

Women who do not hide this true, wild nature become abhorrent to men. When authors like Strindberg or Nietzsche lay bare the core of woman it is men who are most offended, the protagonist thinks.[164] Her pondering is interrupted by the fishing enthusiast asking her: 'Dreaming or speering into futurity? You have the look of a seer. I believe you are half a witch!' She replies: 'Is not every woman that? Let us hope I'm, for my friends, a white one.'[165] This, however, does not seem to be the case, since he later accuses her: 'You have given me something—something to carry away with me—an infernal want. You ought to be satisfied. I am infernally miserable.'[166] In their conversation she then connects witchcraft to women's emancipation and makes clear to him that in the image he presents of them journeying through the world on a boat it

is the boat and freedom that attract her, not him: 'Can't you understand where the spell lies? It is the freedom, the freshness, the vague danger, the unknown that has a witchery for me, ay, for every woman!'[167] At their final meeting he exclaims in despair: 'You witch woman!'[168]

Egerton uses the witch metaphor so many times in this tale that it must be seen as a central motif of the text. It symbolizes the free, autonomous, and unconventional woman, and brings the rebellious feminist witch of authors like Gage and Leland fully into the contemporary period. The Devil may be missing from the equation, but Egerton's writing must have functioned as a significant affirmation of the general notion of witches, traditionally understood as Satanists, as symbols of female power and independence. At the very least, her tales can be expected to have provided a more firm cultural logic for portrayals of explicitly Satanic witches as feminists. Since writers like Egerton established the idea of the non-Satanic witch as an emancipated woman, it would have been less startling to perceive Satanic witches in a similar way.

Today, Egerton's works are often categorized as feminist and are considered crucial to the emergence of the New Woman as a literary figure. She did not, however, view herself as a New Woman and distanced herself from feminism. The women's movement, she felt, created 'an atrophied animal, with degenerate leanings to hybridism', as she puts it in her almost anti-feminist novel *The Wheel of God* (1898).[169] As Margaret Stetz remarks, Egerton propagated 'not civil, but *sexual* rights for women' in all of her books, since her sex suffered both mentally and physically 'under the strain of the sexual hypocrisy enforced by social pressures'.[170] Her position can hence in some sense be said to be a feminist one, since it represents a wish for more rights (sexual, in this case) for women, and criticizes the hypocritical double moral standards of males. Late twentieth-century feminist scholars have condemned Egerton for locking women in an idealized and biologically determined 'natural' role.[171] It is interesting to note that this 'natural' femininity, as constructed by Egerton, is far from only of the tender, maternal variety valued so highly at the turn of the century. It also encompasses strong traits of wildness, coupled with other non-rational and anti-cultural features like strong intuition and instincts. Of course, these were also used in misogynist discourses to argue for why men needed to keep women in check. Embracing them as noble, as Egerton did, must however be seen as

subversive in the context of turn-of-the-century Britain (regardless of how problematic it might seem from the vantage point of our own time).

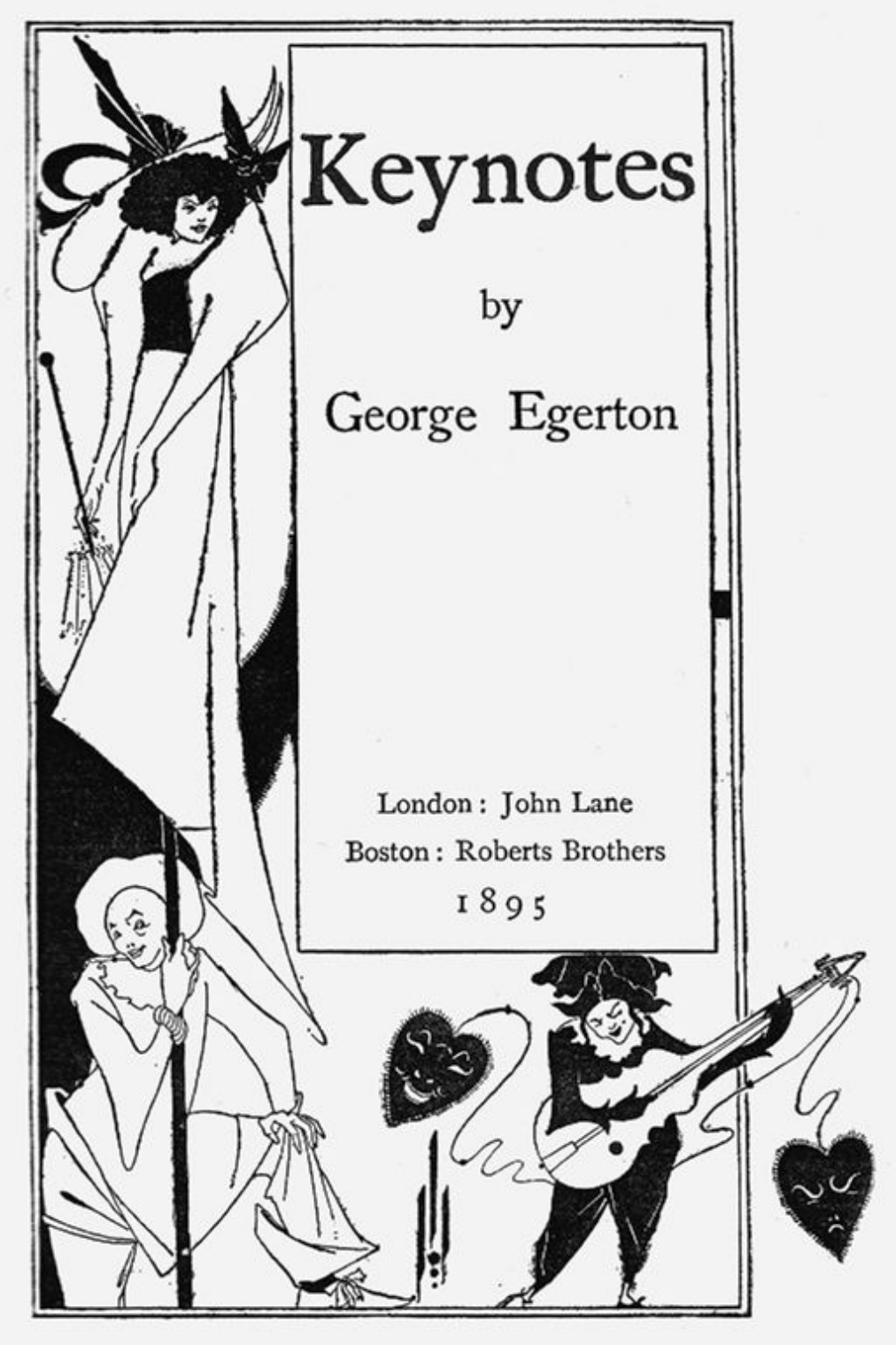

FIGURE 6.7 Title page of George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893), by Aubrey Beardsley.

Keynotes was sufficiently well known to be parodied in the British satire weekly *Punch*, where the author is renamed 'Borgia Smudgiton' and her work *She-Notes*. The parody assumes the reader is fully familiar with the narrative in 'A Cross Line', attesting to its impact.[172] Egerton's short story is presented in a sarcastically exaggerated form, but the whole exercise comes across as somewhat pointless, since Egerton herself has a rather ironic attitude as a writer. The heroine in the *Punch* version cries out, 'Oh! I wish I were a devil', and her lover asks her 'Got the blue devils, little witch?', and she retorts, 'Yes, we are all witches, we women.'[173] The witch metaphors also spilled over from fiction and its parodies into real life, as a friend of Egerton's, the author Richard Le Gallienne, addressed her in a letter as 'Dear Witch'.[174]

Several other authors around this time used the witch as a symbol of headstrong and progressive women. In her short story 'When I Was a Witch' (1910), American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) wrote of witchcraft as a means to achieve the power necessary to right the many wrongs committed in our world. Her heroine makes a pact with Satan, and with her new ability she can mete out a series of punishments to evildoers, for example, those who hurt animals. Her most important wish, 'that women, all women, might realize Womanhood at last; its power and pride and place in life' is however something the Devil is unable to help her with. His magic is black (and thus useful for teaching the wicked a lesson) but this is a white wish.[175] Useless to feminists though Satan may be here, like Egerton's stories this tale nevertheless affirms the connection between witches and longing for female emancipation.

'PATRONESS OF THE GREAT FIGHT FOR FREEDOM': OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER'S REBEL WITCHES

As evidenced in the discussion of Gage and Leland, other authors followed in the footsteps of Michelet's romantization of the witch. Another example is journalist and writer Oliver Madox Hueffer (1877–1931). In his *The Book of Witches* (1908), he encapsulates a number of famous witch trials and presents the witch as a sort of remedy for the disenchantment of the world. He wishes, he says, to show 'how necessary she is and must be to the happiness of mankind', since we have 'few picturesque excrescences left upon this age of smoothly-running machine-wheels, certainly we cannot spare one of the most

time-honoured and romantic of any'.[176] Unlike Michelet, Hueffer is no friend of science: 'The world would be dull, miserable, intolerable did we believe only what our unfeeling stepmother Science would have us believe.'[177] In other matters, the influence of Michelet seems tangible—for example, when Hueffer emphasizes the empowering function of the witch identity: 'Without her witchcraft she was no more than a poor old, starved, shrunken woman, inconsiderable and unconsidered, ugly, despised, unhappy. With it she became a Power.'[178] The thought of being Satan's chosen one was similarly strengthening to women, he argues: '[W]hat a world of consolation in the thought that he, the Prince of the Powers of Darkness, scarcely inferior to the Almighty Himself, and to Him alone, should have singled her out as the one woman whose help he needed in all the countryside.'[179] Additionally, '[l]ove of notoriety is of no modern growth—and the reputation of possessing infernal powers satisfactorily filled the position of the modern newspaper paragraph.'[180] The style of Hueffer's book is quite flippant, but this does not really detract from its underscoring of witchcraft as empowering.

Witchcraft, Hueffer asserts, is not a phenomenon of the past: '[L]ong after the last atheist has departed into the nothingness he claims as his birth right, the witch, once more raised to her seat of honour, will continue to regulate the lives and destinies of her devotees.' Of course, it is 'to women that we must chiefly look for the impetus towards this renaissance', and the witch is a highly suitable symbol for women to gather around in the age of battles for suffrage:[181]

> Persecuted by man-made laws as she [woman] has ever been, and as eternally in revolt against them, there could be no more appropriate or deserving figure to be chosen as Patroness of the great fight for freedom than the much libelled, much-martyrized, long-enduring, eternally misunderstood Witch.[182]

In Hueffer's opinion, women should see it as a mark of honour to be designated a witch:

> Indeed, to be condemned as a witch was but to have an official seal set upon the highest compliment payable to a woman in more than one period of earth's history, seeing that it marked her out from the dead level of mediocrity to which her sex was legally and socially condemned. … From Cleopatra or the Witch of Endor onwards, the exceptional woman has had the choice of effacing her individuality or of being regarded as an agent of the devil.[183]

Woman is more likely to become a witch because of 'the greater quickness of her perceptions', he states, something that is evident already in the Garden of

Eden. Concerning this biblical event, Hueffer argues along the lines of, for example, *The Woman's Bible*: 'If Eve first gave the apple to Adam, she gave with it the future of civilised humanity.'[184] A view of Satan as a cultural hero —similar to Michelet's—is present in several places in this book as well, with phrasings like the following: 'It is to the search after the philosopher's stone and the elixir vitae that we owe the discovery of radium. It was only by calling in the aid of the Devil that mankind acquired the prescience of a God.'[185] This celebration of the Satanic roots of science seems a little surprising in light of Hueffer's professed aversion to the modern scientific age, but consistency is not one of his strong points. In a final, clear echo of Michelet, Hueffer somewhat mitigates the feminist tendencies in his work with a remark about woman's 'natural' role: 'Goddess, priestess, White Witch and Black—all are but variations on that oldest and most beautiful of themes, Motherhood.'[186] In many ways, then, Hueffer can be seen as simply another Michelet epigone, but an uncommonly humorous one. His book, like many other contemporary works, clearly reflects the staying influence of the French historian on most discourse on witches in the time period.

CIRCE, MEDEA, VIVIEN, SIDONIA, AND THE OTHERS: MALE ARTISTS' DEPICTIONS OF WITCHES

Witches, being a colourful and dramatic subject, have long been a favourite motif among pictorial artists. Hans Baldung Grien (1484–1545) produced several engravings of highly sexualized witches, including figures engaged in masturbation, where the naked bodies of hideous crones mingle with curvaceous maiden sorceresses. Albrecht Dürer's 1497 engraving *Die Vier Hexen* ('The Four Witches') can be counted to the same tradition of erotic titillation. It would seem that the following centuries saw a greater emphasis on the frightening rather than alluring aspects of witchcraft, as evidenced, for instance, by several paintings by Salvator Rosa (1615–1673) depicting gnarled and unsightly old witches.[187] Francisco de Goya (1746–1828), perhaps the foremost painter (and engraver) of witches in terms of cultural impact, imagined them in a similar manner. In his works they are ugly, evil, and frightening, one example being the oil painting *Las Brujas* ('The Witches', 1797–1798), which has a group of such figures carry a basket of dead infants and stick pins in a doll. Goya's famous *Caprichos* series (1739–1798) is also thronged with grotesque elderly witches.[188]

In the nineteenth century, especially its latter half, witches abound in pictorial art all over Europe. Some of the works continue the tradition of witch representations established by preceding generations. Antoine Wiertz's *La Jeune sorcière* ('The Young Witch', 1857), for example, shows a repellent old hag seemingly giving advice to a naked young witch about to embark on her first broom ride. A trio of lecherous monks watch from one corner, giving the image a perversely voyeuristic and mildly pornographic undertone. It seems fair to say that the eroticized, naked witches of Grien made a comeback in this period (although they had never been completely absent). Examples include Ernst Herter's sculpture *Walpurgisnacht*(1905) and Vittorio Güttner's bronze *Tanzende Hexe* ('Dancing Witch', 1897).[189] We need not embark on a detailed inventory of the witch motif throughout Europe, as what is of interest here is subversive depictions of witches, which is an uncommon thing in this material. Most of it is clichéd and reproduces the traditional negative ideas about witches discussed in chapter 2. However, not all works follow this pattern. In these cases, it is feasible that women of a more rebellious disposition may have perceived the images as empowering in a way, though it would also be reasonable to argue that some of these women must have been offended by them as expressions of misogyny. In a compelling 1990 article, Susan P. Casteras chooses to focus on the first potential response and claims that

> women viewers had the opportunity to behold and to evaluate the forbidden freedom and the empowerment of goddesses and enchantresses … instead of identifying with constricting Victorian-style attire and rooms full of knickknacks or lush gardens full of blossoms. Little was forbidden to the witch and her sisters, for they transcended mortal law. Unfettered by temporal imperatives, or even by the Victorian lady's corset and yards of heavy dress material, sorceresses acted according to their own dictates.[190]

I will return to this question of audience response after discussing some key works that might have given rise to positive reactions like the one Casteras describes.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England (more of which in chapter 7), and the many artists who soon came to work in accordance with their ethos of medieval and early renaissance revival, are particularly responsible for the prevalence of painted witches from the 1850s onwards.[191] The anti-modern tenor of the Pre-Raphaelite current, and its enthusiastic embrace of traditional mythologies of various kinds, makes it easy to understand why the witch was an irresistible motif for its adherents. Most Pre-Raphaelite witch paintings

portray specific characters, female witches known from literature and legend. For example, Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) painted *Sidonia von Bork, 1560* (1860), where the motif is taken from Wilhelm von Meinhold's 1848 novel bearing her name (von Bork was a real historical figure executed for witchcraft around 1620).[192] Witch figures from Greek myth, such as Medea and Circe, were also the subject of countless paintings. While the characters may have been derived from myth and literature, the portrayals were unique to the artists and to some extent deviated from their sources.[193] Some of the most celebrated works are Frederick Sandys's (1829–1904) *Medea* (1868) and John William Waterhouse's (1849–1917) two portraits of Circe, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891) and *Circe Invidiosa* ('Envious Circe', 1892) (figure 6.8).[194] Waterhouse was fascinated not only by Circe but also by witches in general, as shown by paintings of his like *The Magic Circle* (1886). Art historian Elizabeth Prettejohn has underscored how his women in general tend to be 'rebels who refuse to obey the men (or male gods)'.[195] His witches are the epitome of such rebellion.

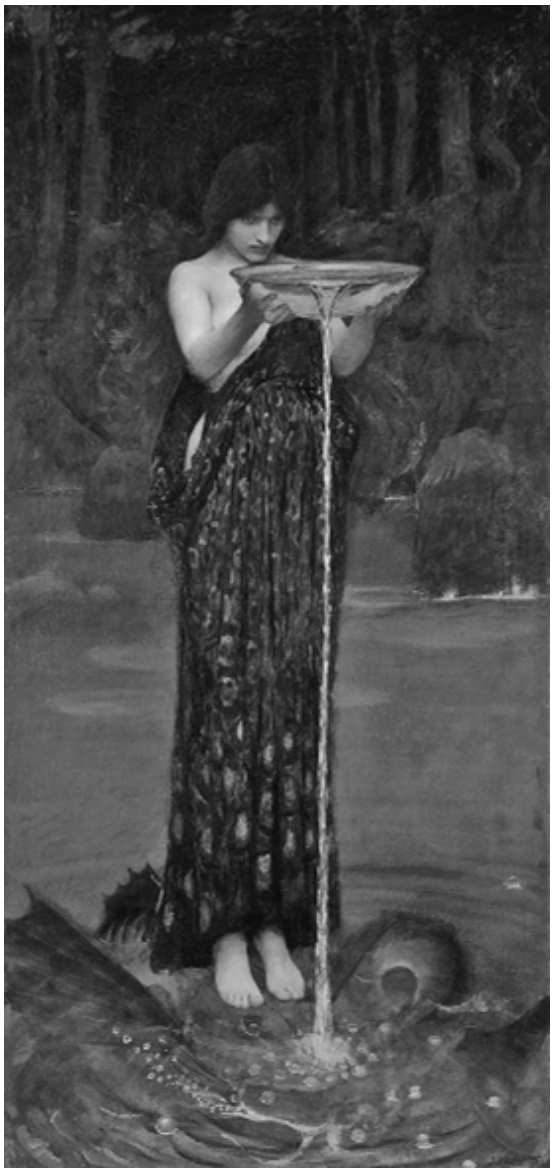

FIGURE 6.8 John William Waterhouse, *Circe Invidiosa*, oil on canvas, 1892, 180 × 87 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australian Government Grant 1892, used with permission.

Other paintings of Medea from the period include Valentine Cameron Prinsep's (1838–1904) *Medea the Sorceress* (1888), where, as Casteras observes, a snake coiled around a tree in the background signals a connection to Eve's collusion with Satan.[196] Arthurian legend was also a rich source of inspiration, and there are many canvases of figures like Morgan le Fay, Nimue, and Vivien. Sandys's *Morgan le Fay* (1862–1863) is one of the more famous (figure 6.9). The witch in this painting seems to be in the midst of an ecstatic ritual, not unlike the Gothic sorceresses Matilda (in *The Monk*) and

Carathis (in *Vathek*), and could perhaps also be read as hysterical in some sense. Casteras suggests this should be interpreted in terms of how 'the madness liberates the women from the constraints of masculine-defined normalcy', an empowering hysteria, as it were.[197] The earlier mentioned *Medea* by Sandys could be perceived in the same way. As with the hysterical witches of the Gothic novels, however, there is no indication that the male artists in any way intended to glorify hysteria as some sort of feminist power source. This is something that would have to lie in the eye of the beholder, and there is little decisive indication that women in this time period interpreted it thus (although it is within the realm of possibility). Nonetheless, as we will see in the section on Mary Wigman, this eventually became the case. The nineteenth-century feminists who used the witch as a positive symbol were probably more likely to distance themselves from the notion of her as hysterical, as in the case of Matilda Joslyn Gage.

FIGURE 6.9 Frederick Sandys, *Morgan le Fay*, oil on canvas, 1862–63, 63 × 45 cm, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. Photo ©Birmingham Museum Trust.

Whatever the role of hysteria here, female empowerment is clearly a theme in many of these works. Edward Burne Jones's *Merlin and Nimue* (watercolour in 1861, oil painting in 1872–77) shows Nimue absconding with her mentor's book of spells and him rushing to retrieve it (figure 6.10). That it depicts a witch who steals power from a man would seem obvious. The same artist's *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1870–74), where Vivien (a variation on the Nimue character) has rendered Merlin powerless and triumphantly holds his grimoire, tells the same story.[198] As usual, we should not take the mere

representation of female empowerment as a lauding of it. These images could just as well, and probably more reasonably, be read as warnings against such women. With pictorial art, however, the meaning is even less "fixed" than in most written texts, and women can conceivably have regarded Pre-Raphaelite witches as inspiring "feminist" figures. I have previously mentioned Casteras's remark that witches were figures of freedom in a sense, uninhibited by nineteenth-century mores. To this we can add that the Pre-Raphaelites often painted them as extremely beautiful as well as exuding power. Traditionally, witches had predominantly been depicted as monstrous, even though there were exceptions to this rule, especially in certain semi-pornographic works. The Pre-Raphaelites broke with tradition in this respect.[199]

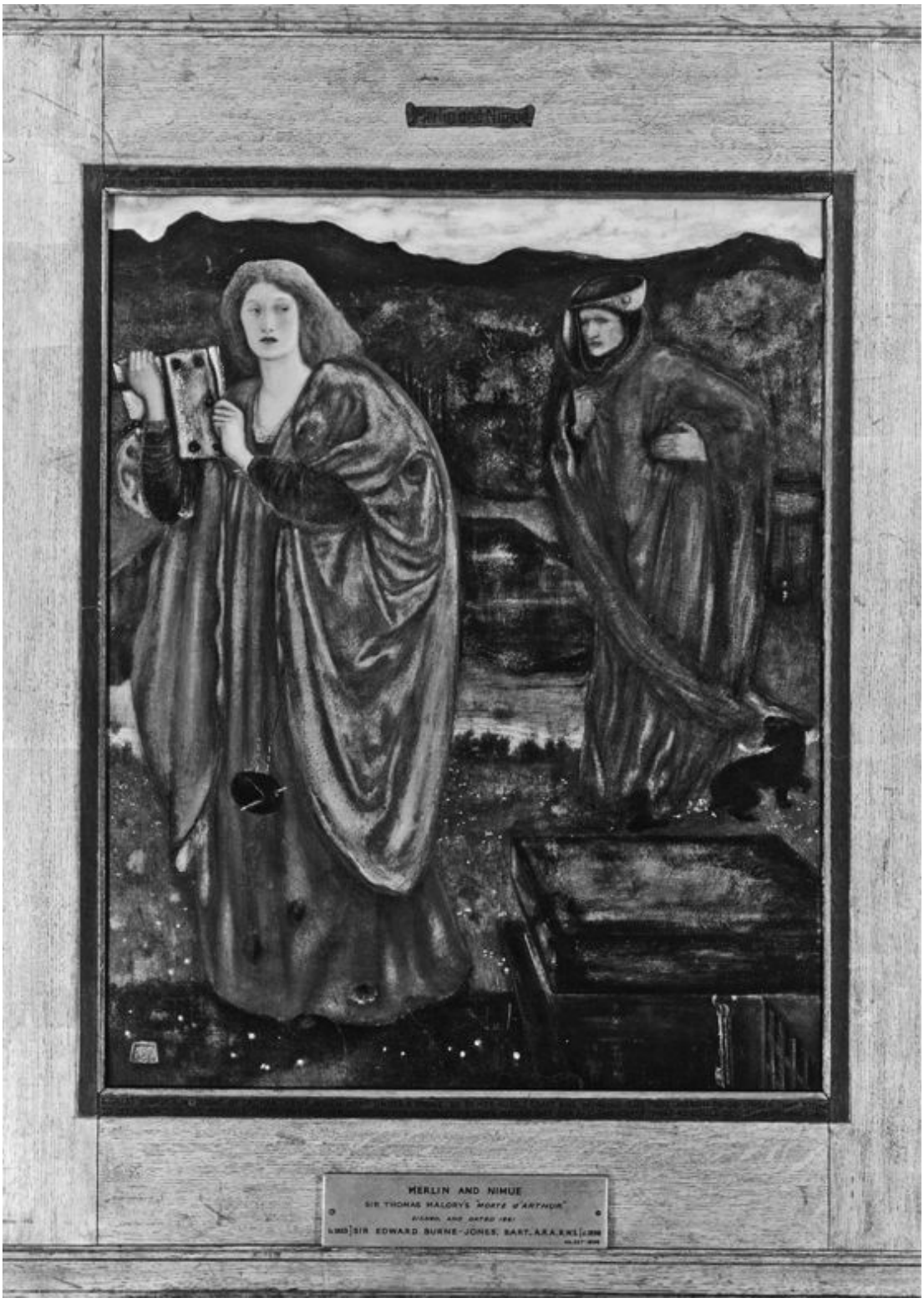

FIGURE 6.10 Edward Burne-Jones, *Merlin and Nimue*, watercolour, 1861, 64 × 52 cm, Victoria & Albert Museum.

The formidable beauty and glamour of the omnipresent Pre-Raphaelite witches in combination with their commanding, assertive postures must have furthered the enthusiasm this motif aroused in certain nineteenth-century women. It cannot be doubted that Casteras is right in her claim that these witches use their sexuality in a forthright manner, are strongly confrontational in appearance, and could be seen as 'romantic outcasts whose roles as anti-heroines are highly seditious in the context of normative Victorian womanhood'.[200] I am more hesitant regarding her claim that the witch 'rarely suffers punishment or penalty for realizing her sexuality'.[201] Even if such punishment is not depicted in the actual paintings, they all drew on well-known textual sources where harsh disciplining of rebel women is definitely inevitable. These consequences of female non-conformism were probably implicit for nearly all educated persons who saw the canvases. This applies to most aspects of the images, which are quite firmly embedded in misogynist narratives. Yet, the emphasis on the comeliness, splendour, grace, and power of witches is to some extent novel in a visual context. It represents a glamorizing of the figure that fits well with other, roughly contemporary, examples of up-valuation of the witch, like Michelet's *La Sorcière*.

'POWER OVER MEN, POWER—POWER!' WITCHES IN THE WORKS OF FEMALE ARTISTS

As Ulrika Stelzl points out, very few works by nineteenth-century women artists depict witches.[202] This it may be related to conventions concerning what motifs were deemed appropriate for women to paint. Let us take a look at some of the few known examples. Elizabeth Siddal (1829–1862), the model for many of the most famous Pre-Raphaelite paintings, was an artist herself and drew *Sister Helen* (ca. 1854), an illustration for her future husband Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem of the same name (1851). It depicts how Helen avenges herself on a faithless lover using an effigy of him, but seemingly clutches her throat in dread as the wax figure melts.[203] Siddal's drawing, in full accordance with the literary text it was based on, emphasizes the tragic dimension of witchcraft and cannot be said to bring feminine power to the fore in any positive way.[204] Rather, it highlights magic as the sinister desperate measure of a powerless and vindictive woman, who herself regrets having resorted to it.

A more feisty and uninhibited vision of the witch was produced by a Russian artist active in Austria, Teresa Feodorowna Ries (1874–1956). She

was born to a wealthy Moscow family and came to Vienna at the end of 1894 to study sculpture. In 1896, she caused an uproar among her peers with the sculpture *Hexe bei der Toilette für die Walpurgisnacht* ('Witch Making Her Toilette for Walpurgisnacht') (figure 6.11). It depicts an old crone cutting her toenails, which many felt to be too intimately bodily and base an activity to be rendered as a sculpture. The protests soon subsided once the Kaiser himself was impressed with the work and asked to meet its creator.[205] Ries's own conception of the witch figure was that she 'had power over men, power—power!'[206] Ulrike Stelzl therefore draws the conclusion that the witch was a symbol of feminine power to Ries, which seems reasonable.[207] *Kunst für Alle* of 1897/98 commented that it was 'a, mildly put, daring work, coming from the hand of a woman artist'.[208] Ries was a daring individual in other ways as well. She was briefly engaged, but ended up living her life as a free, unconventional, and completely self-governing woman. This resulted in the flourishing of a certain mythology around her, in which she was portrayed in various literary works as a dangerously independent femme fatale and even a nymphomaniac.[209] After the *Hexe* sculpture her success and official recognition continued with the plaster figure *Luzifer* (1897), which was awarded the highest medal of merit available for non-Austrians. It has been stressed that she functioned as a role model for other female artists, even if she was not an explicit feminist.[210]

FIGURE 6.11 Teresa Feodorowna Ries, *Hexe bei der Toilette für die Walpurgisnacht*, Museum der Stadt Wien, HMW 139714, marble sculpture, 1896.

FIGURE 6.12 Edith C. Maryon, *Witch and a Cat on a Broomstick*, a.k.a. *To the Witches' Revels*, plaster sculpture, 1904.

A more stereotypical sorceress, *Witch and a Cat on a Broomstick* (1904), was sculpted in England by Edith C. Maryon (figure 6.12).[211] With its use of clichés like the broom and cat, it brings to mind the witch of Victorian fairy tales, but reinterpreted as young and pretty like a kindly fairy queen. The dreaming and mysterious expression on her face has echoes of the Pre-Raphaelite witches, though here coupled with the naked, risqué variety popular with certain other artists. There is, however, little of the sinister carnality often seen in such a context here, and Maryon's witch appears quite innocent—a figure of whimsy rather than an erotic nightmare from the age of the witch trials or the depths of the Decadent imagination. Later, Maryon would go on to be a close associate of Rudolf Steiner, and aided him in the construction of the first Goetheanum.[212]

Maryon was not the only English woman depicting witches at the turn of the century. The ardent Spiritualist Evelyn de Morgan (1855–1919, born Evelyn Pickering) painted huge canvases closely following the Pre-Raphaelite style, and she shared their interest in witches.[213] She produced works like *Medea* (1889) and *The Love Potion* (1903). In the latter a witch sits mixing her elixir amidst books of magic by authors such as Agrippa and Paracelsus, with a black cat at her feet. It has been pointed out that de Morgan frequently gave the most glowing robes to her anti-heroes, and this is an example of just that.[214] Exactly how to interpret such aggrandisement of them is difficult to say. The Medea of de Morgan, just as resplendent in her robe as the brewer of potions, is a coldly beautiful figure who signals intense sadness and anxiety rather than evil. Queen Eleanor, in de Morgan's *Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund* (ca. 1888) is also a witch of sorts, who comes to poison her rival.[215] The symbolism is mildly put heavy-handed, with the innocent Rosamund surrounded by weeping putti and the Queen by semi-transparent winged serpents, leering demonic monkeys, and a bat. This thoroughly wicked witch could hardly, by any stretch of the imagination, be construed as an appealing role model embodying feminine power. Of all these woman-made portraits of witches, it seems only Ries's defiant hag—unashamed of her body, even its more grotesque regions like its gnarly toenails—might have been created with any sort of intentional subversive symbolism in mind. Siddal, Maryon, and de Morgan largely adhere to firmly formulaic conceptions of witches. The latter two to some extent maintain the charisma and elegance of the typical Pre-Raphaelite sorceresses and are hence contributors to the motif of the beautiful and alluring witch. Queen Eleanor as conceived by de Morgan is, by contrast, unambiguously evil and repellent. Imagery like this does not in any way facilitate an understanding of witches as potentially laudable empowered women.

HEXENTANZ: THE EXPRESSIONIST-FEMINIST DANCE OF MARY WIGMAN

There were not, then, many female painters or sculptors portraying witches, and most of their works were far from subversive. However, we could also count dance as a form of visual representation of the motif, and the case of Mary Wigman's (1886–1973) *Hexentanz* ('Witch's Dance', 1914, new version in 1926) then presents an interesting example. In 1918, German women were granted the vote, and various other prospects were starting to

open up to them around this time as well. Wigman's work is thus symptomatic of a new era, where women's freedom was reaching unprecedented levels. However, its creator had grown up in a world that was still highly traditional in its views of a suitable life for females. Born in Hannover, Wigman should according to the plans of her bourgeoisie family have married and become a housewife. After two failed engagements, she refused this proscribed scheme and rebelled against what she perceived to be the hypocritical lifestyle of her parents. The wayward daughter instead decided to become a dancer.[216] She first gained a diploma in eurhythmics, and then studied under the avant-garde dancer and choreographer Rudolf von Laban in the Alpine community of Monte Verità in Switzerland, a countercultural centre where anarchists, vegetarians, Theosophists, Anthroposophists, and other similar dissidents gathered. Celebrities and soon-to-be-celebrities like Paul Klee, Ernst Kirchner, Hugo Ball, Herman Hesse, James Joyce, Rainer Maria Rilke, and D. H. Lawrence all passed through.[217] Wigman would return here later, and in 1917 participated in the *Sonnenfest* ('Sun Festival') performance that was part of the congress of the Ordo Templi Orientis, an esoteric order of which Laban was a member. One section of this performance was focused on the demons of the night, and Laban described it as 'a mystical play in which "witches and demons" were conjured up in masked dances'.[218]

At this point, Wigman had already conjured up the witch in her debut solo performance, which took place in Munich in 1914. It featured *Lento* and *Hexentanz I*, both choreographed by Wigman. In order to emphasize dance as an autonomous art, it had no accompanying music. In 1926, when Wigman's career was at its zenith, she performed a new version of the latter, *Hexentanz II*, which was quite distinct from the first version. She now used a mask, danced to percussive music, and had a different costume.[219] Mary Anne Santos Newhall calls this piece 'a shocking study in female power and the grotesque'.[220] Several scholars have remarked that Wigman 'strove to elevate her art to a new religion and her own status to a priestess', which is also confirmed by her own diaries, statements in interviews, and the fact that she assumed the title 'Priestess of the Dance' in her promotional material.[221] Later, Wigman could also ironically describe herself as a witch.[222] Her artistic talent, and her skill with creating a sensation in just the right way, soon made her famous and she toured internationally. She eventually received enthusiastic acclaim also from people outside avant-garde circles, and the

form of dancing she invented has even been said to have been a 'pop-culture craze' in post–World War I Germany.[223]

Jiyun Song claims that Wigman tried to break free from gendered assumptions concerning female dancers on stage, and that her solution was to make gender invisible.[224] This was also noted by her contemporaries, some of whom were displeased with the lack of eroticism in her dance, feeling that it lacked the expected gender-specific expression and was disturbingly "masculine".[225] Yet, two of her major and most famous works had the witch, a clearly female figure, as their centre point. The witch, however, is of course not a woman conforming to any rules concerning appropriate behaviour for her sex. In fact, it seems the witch is a rather suitable symbol of a refusal to conform to gendered expectations. This is also supported to some extent by Wigman's own words about the vision of herself that inspired the piece. Wigman here emphasizes that she conceptualizes the witch as an abject but fascinating transgressive female, a facet of every woman that she is forbidden to show:

> the image of one possessed, wild and dissolute, repelling and fascinating. The hair unkempt, the eyes deep in their sockets, the nightgown shifted about, which made the body appear almost shapeless: there she was—the witch—the earth-bound creature with her unrestrained, naked instincts, with her insatiable lust for life, beast and woman at one and the same time.
>
> I shuddered at my own image, at the exposure of this facet of my ego which I had never allowed to emerge in such unashamed nakedness. But, after all, isn't a bit of a witch hidden in every hundred-per-cent female, no matter which form its origin may have?
>
> . . . It was wonderful to abandon oneself to the craving for evil, to imbibe the powers which usually dared to stir only weakly beneath one's civilized surface.[226]

The final sentence in the quote confirms that Wigman perceived taking on the identity of a witch as empowering. Laura A. McLary views Wigman's reifying here of traditional essentializing notions of woman as 'earthy, instinctual, and threatening' as problematic.[227] As mentioned in the discussion of Michelet, such objections would seem to come from the perspective of present-day social constructivist feminism and are slightly anachronistic when applied in this context. Judging by the quote, Wigman seemingly thought of releasing 'forbidden' elements of womanhood (wildness, instinct, even 'evil') as a liberating practice, and it seems out of place to deny this on the basis of how the dominant forms of feminism in the twenty-first century approach such matters. Manning describes *Hexentanz II* as a 'defiant assertion that the dancer need not perform woman'.[228] In accordance with my proposed

reading, it could instead be seen as presenting and paying tribute to a counter-version of what femininity should be, rather than functioning as a denial of the existence of femininity as such. Elsewhere, Manning appears to think along the same lines when she suggests *Hexentanz II* 'threatened to redefine Woman as the Demonic, albeit in a way that celebrated rather than denigrated her otherness'.[229]

What did Wigman's witch dances look like, then? In a brief (50 seconds) film clip from 1929 or 1930 of *Hexentanz II*, we see Wigman wear a wig of dark, dishevelled hair, a ghostly female mask, and a flowing gown. Accompanied by percussion she sits, drums her feet against the ground, and moves around like a spider in a somewhat threatening manner.[230]The clip does not document the entire performance, but according to contemporary descriptions and photos, it ended with her rising up from the ground and lifting her hands above her head in a menacing fashion.[231] The bizarre movements in this dance can be seen as neurotic or even insane. This is not all too surprising given the interest in such mental conditions that formed an important part of the Expressionism that reigned in the German art world at the time. It could also be read as having a direct bond with the witch motif itself. McLary suggests that Wigman works like *Hexentanz, Ekstatische Tänze* ('Ecstatic Dances', 1919), and *Tanz des Dämons* ('Dance of the Demon', 1921) were inspired by the connection psychiatrists had proposed between witches, demonic possession, and hysteria. Wigman, however, turns the negatively coded malady on its head, re-enacting 'the hysterical experience as feminine strength'.[232] Here we can also again note the firmly established relationship in the public mind between feminism and hysteria. Once more, then, we see a conflation of witchcraft, hysteria, and feminism, but now more closely approximating a vision of this combination as empowering.

THE SILVER SCREEN SORCERESS: WITCHES IN EARLY CINEMA

Many of those working in the new medium of cinema unsurprisingly found the witch to be a character highly suited to astonishing and entertaining the audience. For example, Georges Méliès (1861–1938), the most important pioneer of fantastic cinema, made several short films where she appears.[233] The silent film that offered the most sustained treatment of the witch was the Dane Benjamin Christensen's (1879–1959) *Häxan* ('The Witch', 1922). This

outlandish work closely reflects contemporary discourses on the figure. It has been described as 'the first true feature-length documentary' and mixes dry scholarly pontification with dramatic re-enactments of early modern conceptions of witchcraft.[234] The latter parts, obviously the main attraction for most audiences, feature a woman being visited by an incubus, astral journeys to the sabbath, trampling of crucifixes, eating of infants, the termination of pregnancy by magical means, and so on. These frequently shocking and grotesque sequences were filmed using state of the art special effects. For example, in order to make the witches appear to "fly" on broomsticks double exposure was employed, and wind was blown at the seemingly airborne women by an airplane engine.[235] The final part of the film details the similarities between present-day hysterics and witches, for instance, how insensitive spots on the body are today considered symptoms of hysteria, while they were considered 'the Devil's mark' in the early modern era. Christensen here also shows how the old superstitions are far from dead, and live on in the practices of fortune-tellers and other obscurants.

As a young man, Christensen had moved to Copenhagen to study medicine, but ended up embarking on a singing career instead. Subsequently, he entered acting school and eventually became a film director.[236] Given his original intention to become a physician, it is perhaps predictable that *Häxan* in a very direct manner draws on the medical theories of the Charcot school concerning witches. Two of the text plates mention Regnard's work, and at the outset it is stated that the most important sources are listed in the programme leaflet of the film (figure 6.13). Consulting this, we find that especially Charcot is brought to the fore.[237] The first spark of inspiration, however, came from a more archaic source. When visiting Berlin in 1914, Christensen stumbled over the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Later during the same trip, he got hold of Michelet's *La Sorcière*. Immersing himself in the history of witchcraft for two-and-a-half years, he arrived at the writings of Charcot and his cohorts. Initially he attempted to directly involve medical researchers in his enterprise, but according to his own statements they did not want to besmirch themselves with as disreputable a medium as cinema.[238] Financing was equally difficult at first. No Danish company was willing to fund the project, but Svensk filmindustri (SF) in Sweden took the chance (hence its Swedish title) with what ended up becoming the most expensive silent movie ever made in Scandinavia.[239] Christensen himself took on the part of the Devil. To play one of the witches, he recruited a pious seventy-eight-year-old flower

seller, since he thought her genuine fear of Satan added to the atmosphere on the set. His actresses had to perform many transgressive deeds, including spitting on a picture of Christ and ritually kissing Satan's anus. Since he embraced Charcot's explanatory model, the director intentionally tried to induce hysteria in his actors and actresses to make the portrayal more authentic. As he later related, one of his means to achieve this was night-time shooting: 'The film deals with hysteria and the dark side of human nature, and when the sun shines in the day it is impossible to call forth precisely those feelings in the actors.'[240]

Censors were flabbergasted by this strange work and did not know what to make of it. In Sweden, this resulted in two neurologists being called in to help decide the fate of the film. After some deliberation, the censors in both Sweden and Denmark approved it for screening.[241] Certain reviewers in Danish newspapers, however, expressed grave concern with the film being shown to youths and demanded it be taken off the screen immediately.[242] Some medical men, in contrast, gave it high marks: a professor Johansen lent it his full support, and Viggo Christiansen, professor of medicine, praised it extensively for its psychological insights.[243] This endorsement was highlighted in the Swedish programme leaflet for the film, where professor Christiansen is said to have proclaimed it 'scientifically fully correct'.[244] The leaflet, clearly attempting to bolster the "scientific" credentials of the film, further underscores the director's early plans to study medicine, and how he has used primary sources like the *Malleus* as well as the writings of Charcot.[245] The negative responses to the film in Scandinavia seem to have been alleviated somewhat by the scientific endorsements. When it opened in France in 1926, incensed moralist reactions were much stronger. Eight thousand Catholic women demonstrated against *Häxan* outside the theatre where the premiere was held. The Parisian surrealists found it very pleasing. Two years earlier, the film had played successfully in Germany, but what moviegoers had been treated to was a truncated version that had resulted from long negotiations between the director and local Catholic groups. In the United States, it was deemed unsuitable for public screening but eventually appeared in a censored version sometime between 1929 and 1932.[246]

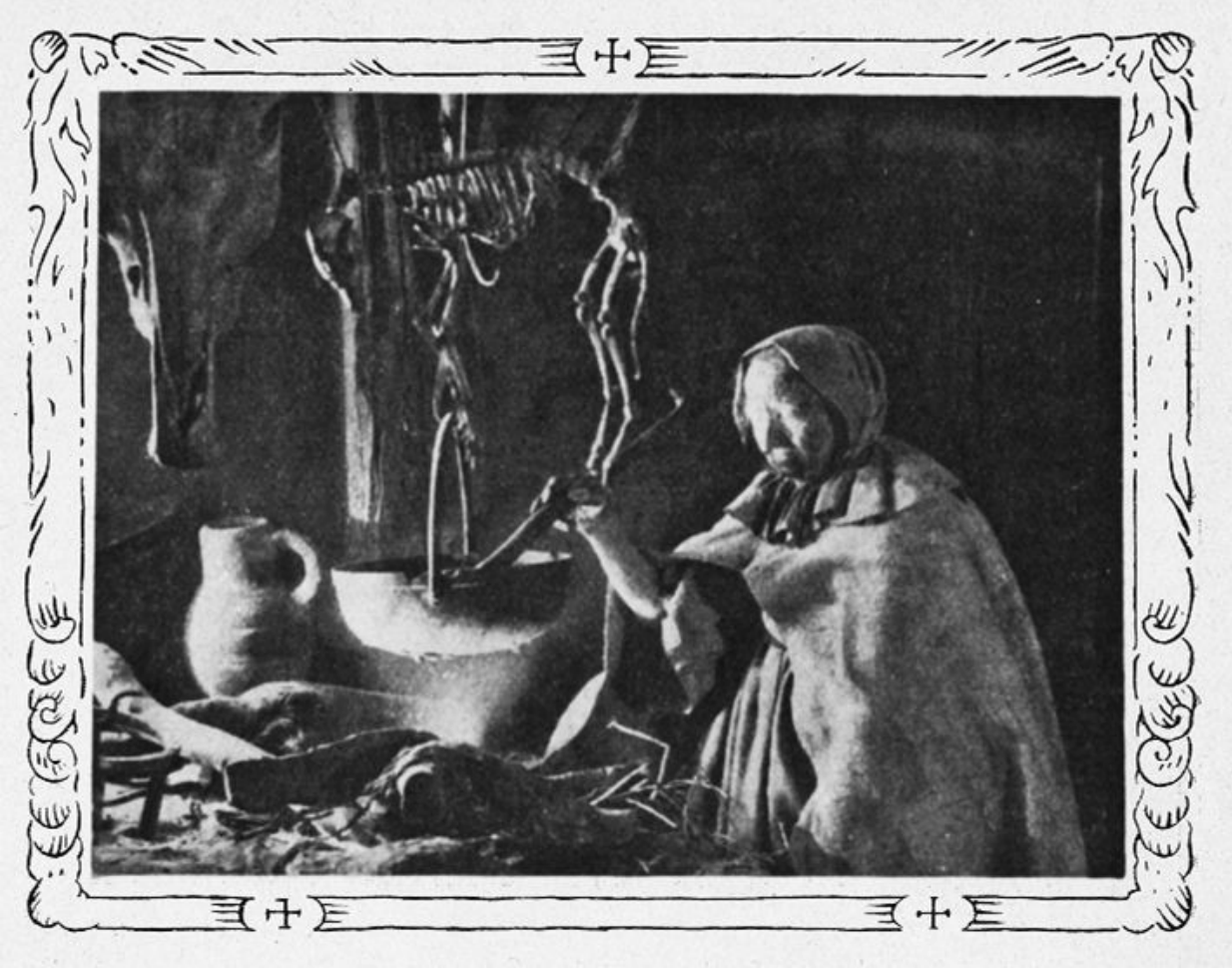

FIGURE 6.13 Image from the programme leaflet of Benjamin Christensen's *Häxan* (1922).

Christensen depicts the witch as a victim of the superstitions of older times, in the form of sadistic monks putting her to the torture, but also highlights witchcraft as an actual practice used by the powerless to attain respect and agency. Accusing others is also shown as such a desperate measure, a way to avenge oneself against those one has been slighted by. The Devil—who the film, of course, ultimately considers a figment of the popular and ecclesiastical imagination—is a monstrous and frightening creature for the most part, although he functions as a comical force of disorder at times and disrupts the mental equilibrium of sternly pious monks.[247] The latter are portrayed in a highly negative manner, and *Häxan* clearly shares Charcot's anticlericalism. It also makes an entertaining spectacle of the witches' Satanism to a degree that somewhat undermines the supposedly detached perspective. The enthusiasm with which various blasphemous rites are

depicted and the director's zest in playing the part of Satan combine to make it almost feel like a celebration of the witches and their god. The negative image of the church as extremely oppressive also contributes to the film's carnivalesque atmosphere of insubordination and subversion. Satanic witchcraft hence comes across as a virtually justified response to clerical tyranny. Since almost all the witches in the film are female, while the inquisitors are naturally male, there is also a strongly gendered dimension to the dialectic of brutal subjugation and ecstatic insurgence. This bizarre 'documentary', then, incorporates some elements of the turn-of-the-century ideas of witches as laudable female rebels (that Christensen would have been familiar with from his reading of Michelet), both as helpless individuals seeking empowerment and as a group revolting against the church. In some of the dramatizations of accusations the witches are cannibals and child murderers as well as pathological hysterics, so they are hardly heroines in any full sense.[248] *Häxan* can thus be said to summarize much of the ambivalent discourse on witches prevalent at the end of the preceding century, which was still quite similar a couple of decades later.

CONCLUDING WORDS

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, three factors influenced most discourse on witches. First, there was the (erroneous) perception of the *Malleus Maleficarum* as an adequate key to a complete understanding of this historical phenomenon, which often led to an exaggerated emphasis on the witch hunters' misogyny and hostility towards the flesh. Secondly, it was hard to avoid Charcot's theories of the witch as a hysteric, which led to a retrospective pathologization of her as well as encouraged parallels to nineteenth-century circumstances. Thirdly, Michelet's vision of the witch as a rebel with both socialist and, in some sense, feminist inclinations had an enormous impact. Anyone taking a serious interest in the topic was bound to stumble on his book. Most seem to have accepted its argumentation, which was especially attractive to those with republican, anticlerical views. This equally applies to the reception of Charcot's theories, which were so well suited as weapons against the influence of the church. Institoris and Sprenger's book, too, provided ideal material for the construction of a straw man Christianity, a supposed great oppressor of freethinkers for centuries. The historical witch thus became a tool for criticizing established religious

institutions, a denunciation that could also be extended to their patriarchal traits. Authors with feminist sympathies seized on the figure of the witch as their ancestress, an audacious proto-suffragette. In Gage's case, this led to her offering an apologetic for Satanism as a form of feminist resistance. When it comes to the grotesquely corporeal and physical witches in the work of Ries and Wigman, they can be seen as a challenge to idealized images of woman as a docile, fragile, and ethereal angel of the house. They would thus, in their own way, have added to the fusing of sorceress and suffragette. The latter was often, we can note, portrayed as physically repulsive, but also as physically active and athletic in an "unsuitable" way. The association between witches and emancipated women was further strengthened by Egerton's New Woman fiction, where the witch functioned as a metaphor for the liberated female. Egerton wrote of such women in an ambiguous manner that most contemporaries likely took as praise of unconventional femininity (and of witches).

As we have seen, the demonization of women's rights activists involved both hysteria and witches, creating a strange circularity between those who used witches as a positive symbol of female rebellion and those who used them to denigrate it. As for the up-valuation of witches, a further factor—which is more amorphous—is how Pre-Raphaelites and others made the visual representations of the figure romantic and glamorous from the 1860s onwards. The influence of this is less easy to trace immediately in the way we can often do with ideas stemming from reading the *Malleus*, Charcot, or Michelet. Nonetheless, this reworking of iconography also undoubtedly hovers somewhere in the background of the cultural renegotiation of the motif taking place around the year 1900, which led some to make the witch a champion of women's liberation.

Other factors that are similarly hard to pin down can also be suggested. Many women, in certain countries, would have tried on the identity of a witch in a playful context in their childhood. In Sweden, for example, children amused themselves by dressing up as witches (or, occasionally, as Satan himself) to go mumming during Easter celebrations (figure 6.14). This quite elaborate tradition was probably established as early as the final decades of the eighteenth century (or possibly somewhat later, there is some uncertainty regarding this matter), and was quite common at least in the Western parts of the country by the nineteenth century.[249] It can also be found in Finland, but not to any great extent elsewhere.[250] The American version of Halloween,

celebrated by most people there from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards, can be considered a counterpart of sorts, and the witch was one of the more popular costumes to don for these festivities. Halloween was brought to the New World by Irish immigrants and had spread to several other ethnic groups at least by 1875.[251] The possibility of temporarily assuming the role of a witch for an instrumental purpose (here to go begging for candy or cause mischief) was thus established in the minds of many women from a young age. Both Halloween and Swedish Easter celebrations quite often retained and alluded to the connection between the witch and Satan, for example, in postcards referring to attending Satan's sabbath feast. These childhood games may not in themselves be that significant, but as parts of a wider cultural complex they help prepare the way for seeing the witch as a conceivable object of identification. Moreover, as historian Fredrik Skott points out concerning the Swedish Easter mummers' shenanigans like smearing windows with tar, '[t]he custom can also be regarded as a more or less accepted revolt against the world of grown-ups and everyday hierarchies of power'.[252] Halloween has been described similarly.[253]It is easy to see how it would seem logical to turn such a revolt specifically against patriarchal structures. The playful enactment of the part of a subversive witch can thus at least be a reinforcing element in the development of the benevolent Satanic feminist witch.

FIGURE 6.14 Ancestresses of the author acting out the role of witches, Nygården, Trollsåsen, Jämtland, Sweden, Easter 1914. Faxneld family album, author's collection.

While such additional factors should be considered, at the end of the day the fin-de-siècle construction of the witch as a Satanic feminist was largely the result of Michelet's book. His words echo, often very distinctly (at times approaching plagiarism), in most texts that present this view. Examples include Gage's *Woman, Church and State*, Leland's *Aradia*, and Hueffer's *The Book of Witches*. All these works present a witch that is both a fairly explicit feminist and a Satanist (or, in the case of *Aradia*, at least intimately connected to Lucifer). Charcot's hypothesis of the witch as a hysteric in a way contributed to the convergence of the sorceress and the feminist, since hysteria was commonly conceptualized as a revolt against male authority. Anti-feminists' slandering of their foes as hysterical would have had the same effect, given that Charcot and his colleagues had established that witches too suffered from this malady. The anti-feminist linking of witch, hysteric, and feminist was made explicit in the work of polemicists like Marholm, and in a

number of caricatures and satires. To those who appropriated the witch as a heroic rebel in the service of women's rights, or some other noble emancipatory cause, the reductionist pathologization proposed by the psychiatrists was incompatible with their rose-tinted vision. Hueffer and Leland are examples of this, and they do not incorporate the Charcot school's understanding in their writings. For someone like Gage, even more concerned than Leland with making the witch a proto-suffragette, it was highly important to tackle this view directly and dismiss it, since it had implications for the perception of her contemporary feminists.

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[1] This Bible quote, like all in the present study, is from the KJV. It is worth noting that later translations, like the New International Version and the English Standard Version, have substituted 'the sin of witchcraft' with 'the sin of divination'.

[2] Moran 2000, p. 147.

[3] In *Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (1999), Ronald Hutton provides an excellent intellectual history of how the figure of the witch gradually became a positive symbol to some people. However, he largely omits the pro-Satanic interpretations of the motif, and instead focuses on those who saw witches as benevolent heathens (understandably, since this was the understanding that Wicca, the "final destination" of his study, was born from). This chapter will hopefully fill that gap in Hutton's epochal work.

[4] Monter 1972, pp. 435–436; Ankarloo [1971]/1996, pp. 11–13.

[5] Hagen 1995, p. 35.

[6] Monter 1972, p. 436.

[7] Hansen 1900. For Hansen's attacks on theologians, see in particular chapters 2 and 3. As was common, Hansen emphasizes the role of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (pp. 473–500).

[8] Hutton 1999/2001, pp. 132–133.

[9] Mitzman 1996, p. 660.

[10] Hutton 1999/2001, p. 138; Crossley 1993, p. 190; Keller 1994, p. 152. On Michelet's insurrectionist activities, see Mitzman 1996, pp. 672, 678–679; Crossley 1993, p. 249.

[11] Quoted in Mitzman 1990, p. 249.

[12] He seldom pretended otherwise, for that matter, and felt 'good history was written by practitioners who were committed to the cause of right and truth' (Crossley 1993, p. 185).

[13] The surrealists were fascinated with Michelet's witch, and, for example, André Breton refers to her in his own writings (Belton 1995, pp. 211–212). Among Michelet's enthusiastic twentieth-century scholarly readers, we find names like Roland Barthes and Georges Bataille. Barthes wrote a preface to an edition of *La Sorcière* (and published a monograph on Michelet in 1954), as did Bataille (to a different edition). Bataille further discusses Michelet's book at length in his *La Littérature et le mal* ('Literature and Evil', 1957). *La Sorcière* also heavily influenced well-known French feminists like

Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous in the 1970s (e.g. Cixous & Clément 1996, pp. 3–5, 32, 54–57). On Michelet and later French feminism, see also Orr 1980, p. 128; Purkiss 1996, pp. 79–82.

[14] Crossley 1993, pp. 197–198, 209–210, 235–236. Quote on p. 210. Judging by his diary, the substantive break with Christianity had occurred by 1843 (p. 230).

[15] Mitzman 1990, p. 250. Michelet himself has even been described as a sort of anarchist in liberal disguise, which may be going a bit too far (Orr 1980, p. 134).

[16] Mitzman 1990, pp. 226–227.

[17] Mitzman 1996, p. 667; Crossley 1993, pp. 211–212. According to Crossley, this distrust of nature lingered even in a late 1850s work.

[18] Gaudin 2006, pp. 49–51.

[19] Crummy 1998, p. 237. Although Sand's influence seems to have been an important factor, we should also note that Michelet had connected Satan with Prometheus and liberty in his diary all the way back in 1825 and had, *en passant*, made the connection between liberty and Satan in his book *Introduction à l'histoire universelle* ('Introduction to World History', 1831) (Bénichou 1977, pp. 518, 559).

[20] Crummy 1998, p. 238.

[21] Orr 1976, p. 94; Belton 1995, p. 211.

[22] Crossley 1993, p. 249.

[23] There are, however, traits in his description of the cult that clearly resonate with ideas about paganism, such as the focus on fertility and nature. Yet, these traits must be seen as filtered through Michelet's description of Satan as a god of nature, which will be discussed later.

[24] There are some minor divergences from this positive image in the more literary passages of the book, where Satan appears first as a helpful little demon of the hearth and home, but later—under the pressures of feudal oppression—grows into a terrible demon. This figure is manipulative, deceptive, and cunning. He asks woman what her will is, and to his delight she answers, 'Great sir, nothing but to do evil' (p. 57; original: 'Messire, rien que de faire du mal' Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 92). This power is to be directed against the tyrannical nobility. My quotes are based on the 1939 English translation.

[25] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 129. Original: 'un livre pédantesque . . . d'un homme vraiment effrayé' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 178).

[26] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. xvii, my italics. Original: 'l'Église a jeté . . . comme impure et suspecte'; 'la résignation, l'attente et l'espoir de la mort'; 'médecin, guérisseur des vivants': 'les ombres aimées'; 'la Logique, la libre Raison' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. xviii). Necromancy is my term, not Michelet's, and is used here in its original sense of communicating with the dead. It seems Michelet himself had a morbidly necromantic streak, in that he had the corpse of his first wife dug up to contemplate the decaying body (!). On this bizarre incident, see Mitzman 1990, p. 226; Crossley 1993, p. 187.

[27] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. xviii. Original: 'par la satanique entreprise des gens'; 'loin de l'École et des lettrés, dans *l'École buissonnière*, ou Satan fit la classe à la sorcière et au berger' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. xix).

[28] Michelet [1862]/1939, pp. 330–331. Quote on p. 331. Original: 'O divine magie!'; 'Si Satan fait cela, il faut lui rendre hommage, dire qu'il pourrait bien être un des aspects de Dieu' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 413). As Charles Rearick points out, the notion of science as an outgrowth of magic was an idea later developed further by, for example, Sir James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, 1890) and in the 1920s by Lynn Thorndike (Rearick 1971, p. 85). Making Satan the ultimate source of science, however, belongs to a distinctly different nineteenth-century discourse. Further, it should be borne in mind that while

Frazer's proposed evolutionary sequence indeed had magic as its first step and science as its last, religion was positioned as a transitory stage between them—something Michelet would hardly have appreciated.

[29] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 309. Original: 'La médecine, surtout, c'est le vrai satanisme, une révolte contre la maladie, le fléau mérité de Dieu. Manifeste péché d'arréter l'âme en chemin vers le ciel, de la replonger dans la vie!' (Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 381–382).

[30] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 309. Original: 'pose sur trois pierres éternelles'; 'la Raison, le Droit, la Nature'; 'une femme, l'infortunée Sorcière, lui donna son essor populaire dans la science' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 382).

[31] Michelet [1862]/1939, pp. 72–73. Original: 'Satan retourne á son Ève. La femme est encore au monde ce qui est le plus nature' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 109).

[32] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 71. Original: 'le fruit de la science et de la nature' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 108).

[33] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 81; Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 119.

[34] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 90. Original: 'la fille en pleurs'; 'la triste épouse accablée chaque année d'enfants qui ne naissent que pour mourir'; 'à glacer le plaisir au moment, le rendre infécond' (Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 130–131). In the same section, Michelet further suggests the witch could, more disturbingly, also help the stepmother who is troubled by that 'the child from the first marriage eats a lot and lives long'. Original: 'l'enfant du premier lit mange beaucoup et vit longtemps' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 130).

[35] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 88. Original: 'Il ne faut pas moins que le Diable, ancien allié de la femme, son confident du Paradis, il ne faut pas moins que cette sorcière, ce monstre qui fait tout à rebours, à l'envers du monde sacré, pour s'occuper de la femme, pour fouler aux pieds les usages, et la soigner malgré elle. La pauvre créature s'estimait si peu!' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 128).

[36] Michelet [1862]/1939, pp. xi, 74, 82–83. Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 111, 121–123.

[37] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. xvii. Michelet [1862]/1989, p. xviii.

[38] Michelet [1862]/1939, pp. 89–90. Original: 'Qu'on ne se hâte pas de conclure du chapitre précédent que j'entreprends de blanchir, d'innocenter sans réserve, la sombre fiancée du diable. Si elle fit souvent du bien, elle put faire beaucoup de mal. Nulle grande puissance qui n'abuse. … Quelle puissance que celle de la bien-aimée de Satan, qui guérit, prédit, devine, évoque les âmes des morts, qui peut vous jeter un sort, vous changer en lièvre, en loup, vous faire trouver un trésor, et, bien plus, vous faire aimer! … Épouvantable pouvoir qui réunit tous les autres! Comment une âme violente, le plus souvent ulcérée, parfois devenue très perverse, n'en eût-elle pas usé pour la haine et pour la vengeance, et parfois pour un plaisir de malice ou d'impureté?' (Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 129–130).

[39] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 94. Original: 'elle n'ait souvent porté un fond de haine niveleuse, naturelle au paysan' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 135).

[40] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 101. Original: 'Il l'appelait en vain, au jour désespéré de sa nécessité suprême. Le ciel dès lors lui parut comme l'allié de ses bourreaux féroces, et lui-même féroce borreau. De là la *Messe noire* et la *Jacquerie*' (Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 143–144).

[41] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 107. Original: 'Sous l'ombre vague de Satan, le peuple n'adorait que le people' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 152).

[42] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 107. Original: 'du sein de la Femme sans doute'; '*Dieu de liberté* le soupir et le vœu des serfs'; 'Que nous autres, leurs descendants lointains, nous fussions affranchise'

(Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 151).

[43] Lincoln 2008, p. 85.

[44] Conway [1878]/1880, pp. 326–327.

[45] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 102. Original: 'La *Messe noire*, dans son premier aspect, semblerait être cette rédemption d'Eve, maudite par le christianisme. La Femme au sabbat remplit tout. Elle est sacerdoce, elle est l'autel, elle est l'hostie, dont tout le peuple communie. Au fond, n'est-elle pas le Dieu méme?' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 145).

[46] The male peasant 'would never have given woman the dominant place she has here. It is she who takes it herself', he writes. Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 102. Original: 'n'aurait pas donné à la Femme la place dominante qu'elle a ici. C'est elle qui la prend d'elle-même' (Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 145–146).

[47] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 103. Original: 'Représentez-vous'; 'sur une grande lande, et souvent près d'un vieux dolmen celtique, à la lisière d'un bois' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 147).

[48] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 104. Original: 'les uns n'y trouvaient que terreur'; 'les autres étaient émus de la fierté mélancolique où semblait absorbé l'eternel Exilé' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 147).

[49] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 104. Original: 'La fiancée du Diable ne peut être un enfant; il lui faut bien trente ans, la figure de Médée, la beauté des douleurs, l'œil profond, tragique et fièvreux, avec de grands flots de serpents descendant au hasard; je parle d'un torrent de noirs, d'indomptables cheveux. Peut-être, par dessus, la couronne de verveine, le lierre des tombes, les violettes de la mort' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 148).

[50] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 106. Original: 'De son corps prosterné, de sa personne humiliée, de la vaste soie noire de ses cheveux, perdus dans la poussière, elle … s'offrait. Sur ses reins, un démon officiait, disait le *Credo*, faisat l'offrande' (Michelet [1862]/1989, p. 150).

[51] Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 310. Original: 'La femme, aux derniers siècles occupée d'affairs d'hommes, a perdu en revanche son vrai rôle: celui de la *médication*, de la *consolation*, celui de la Fée qui guérit. C'est son vrai sacerdoce. Et il lui appartient, quoi qu'en ait dit l'Église' (Michelet [1862]/1989, pp. 382–383).

[52] Kippur 1981, p. 207.

[53] Purkiss 1996, p. 35.

[54] Johansson 1993, p. 12.

[55] Hutton 1999/2001, p. 140.

[56] Goldstein 1982, pp. 230–231. Goldstein's article is the classic study of this tension, and its conclusions constitute the basis of most later scholarship, e.g. Midelfort 2002 and Harris 2004.

[57] Midelfort 2002, p. 203; Goldstein 1982, pp. 234–235. Tendencies to pathologize these phenomena were, we should note, present much earlier, as, for example, theologians were fully aware that the typical symptoms could be evidence of illness rather than Satanic activity and could further be feigned for various purposes unrelated to the demonic realm. For a discussion of this, see Häll 2013, pp. 182–183, 444–448.

[58] Charcot & Richer 1887.

[59] Regnard 1887, pp. 12–13, 20–21.

[60] Ibid., p. 78.

[61] Midelfort 2002, p. 209. For a nuancing of the historical views on the relation between possession and witchcraft, see Häll 2013, pp. 445–447.

[62] Gluck 2005, pp. 135–136, 140–142.

[63] Beizer 1994, pp. 20–29. The most famous book illustrating this phenomenon was T. Barthélémy's *Étude sur le dermographisme* ('Studies in Dermographism', 1893).

[64] Hustvedt 1998, pp. 16–17, 28–29.

[65] Sigmund Freud, for instance, published an article in 1897 where he largely chimed in with his former teacher Charcot's view of witches as hysterics who were very much like the female patients he treated in his own time (Moran 2000, p. 141). Swedish physicians, to mention another example, were also interested in the phenomenon, and the ideas in Anton Nyström's small 1896 study *Häxeriet och häxeriprocesserna* ('Witchcraft and the Witchcraft Trials') are close to those of his French colleagues. Nyström, in particular, highlights how woman's 'more sensitive constitution' means 'that she has generally been more susceptible to fantasies and suggestions and has more easily entered a state of ecstasy' (Nyström 1896, p. 11: 'mer känsliga organization'; 'att hon i allmänhet varit mer mottaglig för fantasier och suggestioner och lättare iråkat ekstasens tillstånd'). Ecstasy is here to be understood more or less as a form of hysteria.

[66] Showalter 1985, p. 121. Regarding the gendering of hysteria, Elaine Showalter has argued that even if Charcot did not see the malady as exclusive to women (there was even a wing for male hysterics at his hospital, though these patients were much fewer), it still remained so symbolically for him, for instance, in his choice of exclusively using female subjects for his demonstrations (Showalter 1985, p. 148). The sense in the wider culture, at any rate, seems to have been that hysteria primarily afflicted women, and secondarily womanly men (like Decadents).

[67] In a reprint of an 1870 article by Linton ('The Shrieking Sisterhood') in her 1883 book *The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays*, she describes them as being in a state of 'hysterical excitement' and making 'a hysterical parade … about their wants and their intentions' (Linton 1883, pp. 64, 65).

[68] Weininger 1903/2005, p. 61.

[69] Quoted in Evans 1991, p. 39.

[70] Ibid., p. 40.

[71] Showalter 1985, pp. 133–134, 147.

[72] Ibid., p. 161.

[73] Charchot's referencing of *La Sorcière* is mentioned in Camhi 1991, p. 72. For an example of the reliance of his disciples on Michelet for support, see Regnard 1887, p. 8.

[74] At times, the coming together of all three became quite explicit (we will consider an example of this in a text by J.-K. Huysmans in chapter 7).

[75] On Marholm's role in contemporary debates, see Witt-Brattström 2007 and Brantly 1988. Naturally, since she was based in Scandinavia and Germany, Marholm's ideas are embedded in a context that was partly quite different from that of, for example, Charcot. My interest in her text here, however, is as a part of a broader European discourse on witches and feminism.

[76] Marholm 1897, p. 25: 'kvinnans emancipation,—det är kvinnans förtviflan öfver sig själv som kvinna'.

[77] Ibid., p. 249: 'Hvad hjelper det mig att jag … skrifver de allra bästa böcker … om jag har sjukliga barn?'

[78] Ibid., p. 104: ‘Samma behov af incitation hos kvinnorna, hvilket för tre århundraden tillbaka dref dem till att angifva hvarandra som hexor och bekänna sig själfva som hexor, drifver dem i våra dagar in i kvinnoemancipationen. Det ena som det andra är förflyttade emotionella drifter, hvilka ledts bort från sin centralpunkt’.

[79] Stelzl 1983, p. 47. For an example of how controversial bicycling women were, see Stanton 1898, p. 456.

[80] Quoted in Kline 1992, p. 82.

[81] White 2003, pp. 9–13, 15; Gibson 2007, pp. 113–115 (quote on p. 114). On Gage’s schooling and family life, see also Selvidge 1996, p. 144. In view of her sharply critical attitude towards Christianity, it is surprising to note that even after she became a Theosophist, Gage maintained her membership in the Fayetteville Baptist Church (Selvidge 1996, p. 144). The exact details concerning this retained affiliation are not known, however.

[82] White 2003, pp. 20–24.

[83] Ibid., pp. 33–34.

[84] Ibid., p. 35.

[85] Ibid., p. 125.

[86] Ibid., p. 127.

[87] Gage 1893/1972, p. 224. The version I have used is a facsimile of the second edition, published in 1900.

[88] Ibid., p. 226.

[89] Ibid., p. 233.

[90] Blavatsky [1877]/1988, vol. 2, pp. 54, 65.

[91] Gage 1893/1972, p. 251.

[92] Ibid., pp. 233–234. Quotes on p. 234. Gage further explains that ‘[a]ll modern investigations tend to prove what was called witchcraft, to have been in most instances the action of psychic laws not yet fully understood’ (p. 235).

[93] The notion of yesterdays’ magic as today’s science (and, by extension, today’s magic as tomorrow’s science) is present in Theosophy, and was popular also with men of letters influenced by esotericism, like, for example, Strindberg and Przybyszewski (cf. Faxneld 2012h, p. 61; Johnson 2015).

[94] Gage 1893/1972, pp. 235–237. Quote on p. 236. Pacini, we should note, did not have esoteric leanings, but Gage, in a typical occultist legitimating manoeuvre, appropriates his findings to support her own occult understanding of the supposed powers of witches.

[95] Ibid., p. 237. Gage also states that the experiments of modern science support the belief that black magicians actually had the ability to hurt their enemies using a wax doll (p. 252).

[96] Ibid., p. 247. Present-day scholarly calculations of the number of victims are considerably more modest. Even in Gage’s time, they tended to be on the moderate side compared to her figure, which she probably inflates to emphasize the enormity of this patriarchal crime against womankind.

[97] Blavatsky [1877]/1988, vol. 2, pp. 61, 65.

[98] Gage 1893/1972, pp. 236, 238–239. Cf. Blavatsky [1877]/1988, vol. 1, p. 354. I have not seen anyone else comment on this and other more or less clear derivations from Blavatsky in Gage’s discussion of witches.

[99] Gage 1893/1972, pp. 243–244.

[100] Ibid., p. 240.

[101] Ibid., p. 242.

[102] Ibid., p. 257. Paraphrasing Michelet, Gage further writes that '[d]uring this mocking service a true sacrifice of wheat was offered to the "Spirit of the Earth" who made wheat grow, and loosened birds bore aloft to the "God of Freedom" the sighs and prayers of the serfs asking that their descendants might be free' (pp. 257–258). In Michelet's book, it is quite clear (see the section on *La Sorcière*) that the Spirit of the Earth and the God of Liberty are both forms of Satan, and it is possible to read Gage's words in a similar fashion. They might also possibly be understood, since she does not include Michelet's lengthy discussion of Satan as a god of nature and liberty, as giving her portrayal of the phenomenon an additional "pagan", non-Satanic slant. It is this aspect that Ronald Hutton chooses to focus on in his brief discussion of Gage (Hutton 1999, p. 141), but, as is quite clearly shown, a pro-Satanic streak (an apologetic for Satanism as a form of feminist resistance) is also present. It seems Hutton bases his analysis on secondary sources (see p. 437, n. 40), which may account for this slight misrepresentation.

[103] Gage 1893/1972, pp. 257–258. Quotes on p. 258.

[104] Ibid., p. 259.

[105] Ibid., p. 258.

[106] Ibid., p. 234.

[107] White 2003, pp. 36–38. On Comstock's reaction, see also Corey 2003, p. 53.

[108] The most striking ideas about how the Black Mass was a morally pure Satanic rebellion against a patriarchal church are to be found in almost identical wordings in the 1881 book (Gage 1881/1970, pp. 763–769, esp. pp. 763–764). Here too Gage references Michelet (p. 763). Like the version of *Woman, Church and State* that I have used, the 1970 re-publication of *History of Woman Suffrage* is a facsimile (in this case of the second edition, from 1889).

[109] White 2003, pp. 83–84, 97.

[110] Gage 1893/1972, pp. 238, 252.

[111] Russell 1980/2007, p. 150.

[112] Leland 1899, p. v.

[113] Ibid., p. vi.

[114] Ibid., pp. vii–viii, 101.

[115] Russell, thoroughly incredulous, writes: 'The book draws on a knowledge of Gnosticism, paganism, and mythology for much of its content. To that mixture it adds an awkward parody of the biblical creation story and a literate attack on Christianity. That particular combination is quite likely to occur in the mind of a nineteenth-century man of letters, but it is not at all likely to occur as a historical artefact' (Russell 1980/2007, p. 152).

[116] Hutton 1999, p. 147.

[117] Pazzaglini 1998, pp. 93–98; Hutton 1999, p. 143.

[118] For evidence of Maddalena's existence and Leland's potentially problematic (from a scholarly perspective) financial relationship with his informant, see Mathiesen 1998, pp. 31–32, 48–49; Gibson

2007, p. 147. Both Mathiesen (1998, p. 49) and Hutton (1999, pp. 146–147) suggest the possibility of Leland to an extent having been duped by Maddalena.

119 Hutton and Gibson (the latter has even studied Leland's original manuscripts) both discuss the matter thoroughly, but (perhaps wisely) without reaching any definitive conclusions (Hutton 1999/2001, pp. 145–148; Gibson 2007, pp. 144–149, 249). See also Rose 1989, pp. 213–218.

120 Leland 1899, p. 1. The parenthesis is Leland's.

121 Ibid., pp. 18–19. Somewhat incompatibly, there are also entities called 'the fathers of the Beginning' that seem to stand above Diana.

122 Ibid., pp. viii, 1, 101–103. As Hutton points out, Leland probably acquired this name from Michelet (Hutton 1991/1995, pp. 301, 307–308).

123 Leland 1899, p. 103.

124 Ibid., p. 12. Leland calls this type of conjuration, where the deity is threatened, 'the rudest primitive form of conjuring' and claims the procedure is 'just as in Eskimo or other Shamanism' (p. 24).

125 On this, see Faxneld 2006a, pp. 37–44; Kieckhefer 1989/2000, esp. pp. 2–5, 15–16, 70–71, 156–161, 166–171.

126 Leland 1899, p. 17.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., p. 24.

129 Ibid., p. 33.

130 Ibid., p. 98.

131 Ibid., p. 108.

132 Ibid., p. 104.

133 Chartowich 1998, pp. 453–454.

134 Leland 1899, p. 102. For a very different reading of Satan's role in *Aradia* (and in *La Sorcière* as well), see Gibson 2007, p. 148.

135 Leland identifies Lucifer with Apollo, which is logical, since he is the twin brother of Diana according to Roman mythology. As Fredrik Gregorius has pointed out, this makes Leland's Lucifer 'more of a pagan deity than the actual text indicates' (Gregorius 2013, p. 233). The text supposedly received from Maddalena, then, clearly highlights a connection to Satan, which Leland strives to mitigate. Although there is a competing and overlapping strand of (Roman) paganism in the witchcraft described in *Aradia*, the Satanic features are prominent enough to make it reasonable to say we are dealing with a case of (somewhat indirect) Satanic feminism.

136 Leland argues that the Lilith in his material is not to be understood as a demoness from Jewish lore, but 'an earlier replica of Lilith, bearing the same name. It is, in fact, an identification or twining of the Aryan and Semitic Queens of Heaven, or of Night and of Sorcery' (Leland 1899, p. 102).

137 On Conway and Lilith, see chapter 2. We can here also note that Dante Gabriel Rossetti calls Lilith a witch in his poem 'Body's Beauty' (1870) (Rossetti 2003, p. 161).

138 Mathiesen 1998, p. 57.

139 Leland 1899, p. 1.

140 Ibid., p. 106.

[141] Ibid., p. 114.

[142] Ibid., p. 111.

[143] Ibid., p. x.

[144] Ibid., pp. 112–113.

[145] Ibid., p. 113.

[146] Ibid., pp. 4–5.

[147] Hutton 1999/2001, p. 142.

[148] Hutton 1991/1995, p. 301. Clifton contends that aside from his actions in 1848 Leland was quite conservative in his political orientation (Clifton 1998, pp. 66–67). Clifton's argumentation is a bit vague. He refers to a general impression gained from reading Leland's books and letters, without providing any specific examples, and mentions that Leland supported Abraham Lincoln, engaged in oil exploration, dined with nobility, and enjoyed staying in comfortable hotels. While the two last-mentioned activities hardly disqualify someone from having partly radical opinions, Clifton demonstrates that the case is not as clear-cut as Hutton proposes.

[149] Mathiesen 1998, pp. 47, 57.

[150] Gibson 2007, p. 146.

[151] Ibid., p. 149.

[152] Later authors that draw on Leland's book include Hueffer (1908/1973, p. 158) and Kenyon (1929).

[153] Mathiesen 1998, pp. 26–27.

[154] Gibson 2007, p. 149.

[155] Leland 1899, p. 114.

[156] George Egerton can be said to be the third in a row of famous female authors who used the masculine pseudonym George. She had been preceded by George Sand and George Eliot, who at the time of her debut were both dead (since 1876 and 1880, respectively). Middlebrook 1948, p. 141.

[157] Ibid., p. 145.

[158] Stetz 1982, p. 34.

[159] Egerton 1895, pp. 118–119.

[160] Even if this is the dominant use of the figure by Egerton, it is on one occasion also used to symbolize a more traditional femininity. The case in point is the caring and tender heroine who has taken a poet under her wing and is called 'a great strong silver witch' by him in 'The Regeneration of Two' (Egerton 1894, p. 237).

[161] Egerton 1895, p. 15.

[162] Ibid., p. 16, second italics mine.

[163] Ibid., p. 22, my italics.

[164] Ibid., p. 23.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid., p. 25.

[167] Ibid., p. 27.

[168] Ibid., p. 30. Ultimately, however, the witch woman discovers she is pregnant by her husband and abandons her lover.

[169] Egerton 1898, p. 349.

[170] Stetz 1982, p. 68. Stetz's underlining has been replaced with italics.

[171] E.g. Boumelha 1982, pp. 85–86.

[172] Ibid., p. 63.

[173] The parody is reprinted in Showalter 1993/2006. Quotes on pp. 70–71.

[174] Stetz 1997, p. 98.

[175] Gilman 1992, p. 218.

[176] Hueffer 1908/1973, p. x.

[177] Ibid., p. 7 (see also p. 333). In the preface of the book, Hueffer asks, with a quirky sense of irony, if it would not be preferable to the dreadful determinism of modernity 'that a few thousand old women be murdered in the name of superstition, a few millions of human beings butchered in the name of religion, than all mankind be doomed to such a fate' (p. 9).

[178] Ibid., p. 10.

[179] Ibid., p. 10.

[180] Ibid., p. 184.

[181] Ibid., p. 17.

[182] Ibid., pp. 17–18.

[183] Ibid., pp. 114–115.

[184] Ibid., p. 46.

[185] Ibid., p. 67. Also like Michelet, Hueffer wavers somewhat between idealizing Satan and his adherents, on the one hand, and, on the other, wallowing in grotesque descriptions of the evil deeds of witches. See e.g. p. 25.

[186] Ibid., pp. 48–49.

[187] Lorenzi 2005, pp. 81–89, 108–109, 114.

[188] See e.g. engravings number 44, 45, 47, 66, 67, and 68 in this series (all reproduced in Cela 1989). Engraving number 60, however, shows a young witch, and it is possible that one of the two figures in number 68 is young (it is difficult to tell, since her face is hidden). *Las Brujas* is better known in English as *Night Scene with Witches*.

[189] Concerning Wiertz, Herter, and Güttner, see Stelzl 1983, pp. 14, 33–35, 67–69. The iconography of the witch prior to the nineteenth century is covered in some detail in Lorenzi 2005. However, Lorenzi's concluding chapter that discusses the nineteenth century is very brief and unsatisfying. The best work treating this period is Stelzl 1983, though it focuses almost exclusively on art from German-speaking countries.

[190] Casteras 1990, p. 144.

[191] I here use the term Pre-Raphaelite inclusively to designate not only the actual members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood proper but also encompassing the later painters (e.g. John William Waterhouse) that would subsequently often come to be grouped with the original circle.

[192] Zettel 2009, pp. 41–45.

[193] Prettejohn 2008, pp. 27, 31.

[194] Waterhouse also did a third painting of Circe, *The Sorceress* (ca. 1911).

[195] Prettejohn 2008, p. 31. Prettejohn's suggestions about possible influences from contemporary occultism on Waterhouse (pp. 30–34) are interesting, but exceedingly vague.

[196] Casteras 1990, p. 149.

[197] Ibid., p. 154.

[198] On the biographical background to these paintings (related to Burne-Jones's model Maria Cassaveti-Zambaco), see Klewitz 2009, pp. 79–83.

[199] In terms of, for example, renaissance paintings of evil but beautiful women like Pandora, Medea, and so on, however, they were fully in line with tradition. I wish to thank Caroline Levander for pointing this out in a discussion of the matter.

[200] Casteras 1990, p. 169.

[201] Ibid., p. 170.

[202] Stelzl (1983, p. 17) states that Ries and Maryon's sculptures (see figures 6.11 and 6.12) are the only depictions she could find of witches by woman artists of the time period. I have found some further works, but I am convinced there must be many more that are now lost or forgotten.

[203] Marsh 1987, pp. 109–110.

[204] Cf. Rossetti 2003, pp. 6–14. The poem ends with Sister Helen declaring that her soul is lost.

[205] Plakolm-Fortshuber 1997, pp. 182–183.

[206] Quoted in Stelzl 1983, p. 21: 'Macht über Menschen hat, Macht—Macht!' Note that the German original, just like my English translation, does not denote power over males, but power over mankind in general.

[207] Ibid., p. 22.

[208] Ibid., p. 18: 'ein für eine weibliche Künstlerhand, gelinde gesagt, verwegenes Werk'.

[209] Plakolm-Fortshuber 1997, pp. 184–185.

[210] Ibid., pp. 182–183. The 'Luzifer' figure had the following inscription on its base: 'Are you happy, counterpart of God?' ('Bist Du glücklich, Ebenbild Gottes?'). Mark Twain saw this sculpture and commented on it as impressive and majestic (ibid.). Her brooding fallen angel is quite similar to Rodin's *Le Penseur* ('The Thinker', first version 1880), but even more so to Franz von Stuck's painting *Luzifer* (ca. 1890) and the Devil who is the central figure in Gustav Vigeland's massive *Helvete* ('Hell', 1894).

[211] Also known as *To the Witches' Revels*.

[212] On Maryon, see Raab 1993.

[213] On de Morgan, see Marsh & Nunn 1989, pp. 107–113, and the essays in Gordon 1996.

[214] Yates 1996, p. 71.

[215] Edward Burne-Jones also painted several versions (1860–62) of Fair Rosamund and Queen Eleanor, inspired by Swinburne's verse epic *Rosamond* [*sic*] (1860). Other Pre-Raphaelites were similarly inspired. Evelyn de Morgan was hence here working with a well-established Pre-Raphaelite motif (Zettel 2009, pp. 45–48).

[216] Newhall 2009, pp. 7–13.

[217] Ibid., pp. 19–20; Kolb 2009, p. 143.

[218] Newhall 2009, p. 25; Manning 1993, pp. 77–79. Laban quote in Newhall 2009, p. 25.

[219] Song 2007, pp. 427–428, 430. In the 1930s, Wigman also choreographed a group *Hexentanz*. Newhall 2009, p. 52.

[220] Newhall 2009, p. 33.

[221] Ibid., p. 90; Song 2007, pp. 429, 431 (quote on p. 429). That Wigman saw dance as a religious activity is to be seen, for example, in interview statements like the following: 'We have no uniform religion now to which to dedicate the dance. But in every person there is a deep religious sense that springs from a vision of the infinite. It deserves a common expression.' Quoted in Newhall 2009, p. 66.

[222] McLary 2003, p. 366.

[223] Newhall 2009, p. 75.

[224] Song 2007, p. 435.

[225] McLary 2003, p. 351; Manning 1993, pp. 259–260.

[226] Wigman 1963/1966, pp. 40–41.

[227] McLary 2003, p. 363. On Wigman's essentialism, which was quite explicit in her writings, see also Kolb 2009, pp. 145–146.

[228] Manning 1993, p. 219.

[229] Ibid., p. 130. Cf. Kolb 2009, pp. 150–151.

[230] The dating of the clip is McLary's (2003, p. 367).

[231] McLary 2003, p. 362. The mask was an important addition for Wigman, who explained: 'The mask can and never ought to be an interesting addition or decoration. It must be an essential part of the dance figure, born in a world of visions and transported as if by magic into reality. The mask extinguishes the human being as a person and makes him submit to the fictive figure of the dance' (Newhall 2009, p. 106). The *Hexentanz II* mask was inspired by those in Japanese Noh theatre (p. 107). Interestingly, it has been suggested some of the gestures in this dance piece are borrowed from Ordo Templi Orientis rituals (p. 111).

[232] McLary 2003, pp. 253, 364. Quote on p. 364. Cf. Kolb 2009, pp. 147–149.

[233] Not all of Méliès's films have survived, but some of his extant works that treat this motif include *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896) and *La Fée Carabosse* (1906).

[234] Stevenson 2006, p. 5.

[235] Ibid., p. 29.

[236] Ibid., pp. 7–9.

[237] Anonymous 1922, p. 10.

[238] Stevenson 2006, pp. 17–18, 25, 43.

[239] Ibid., pp. 25–26.

[240] Ibid., pp. 30–36. Quote on p. 36.

[241] Ibid., pp. 42–43.

[242] Ibid., pp. 50, 56.

[243] Ibid., pp. 43, 63.

[244] Anonymous 1922, p. 6: ‘vetenskapligt fullt korrekt’.

[245] Ibid., pp. 9–10, 15.

[246] Stevenson 2006, pp. 64–66, 80.

[247] While these scenes should be understood as dramatizations of hallucinations, they still tell a tale of Satan as a force subverting the rule of the priests (who are portrayed as cruel and perverted) and make him seem a sort of liberating trickster figure.

[248] Here, too, it is the case that though the scenes of cannibalism and infanticide are supposed to be fantasies, they contribute to the overall image conveyed by the film (here making the witch seem less appealing).

[249] Skott 2007, pp. 572, 575, 581–582.

[250] Skott 2013, pp. 149–153.

[251] Rogers 2002, pp. 67, 74.

[252] Skott 2007, p. 579.

[253] Rogers 2002, pp. 41–42, 66, 71–74.

When the Devil was a woman,
When Lilith
Tied her black hair in severe knots
. . .
When she read Bourget
And loved Huysmans
When she understood Maeterlinck's quietude
And bathed the soul
In Gabriel d'Annunzio's colors[1]

HANNS HEINZ EWERS, 'Aus dem Tagebuche eines Orangenbaumes' (1917)

7

Subversive Satanic Women in Decadent Literature and Art

INTRODUCTION

Mention Satanism in the nineteenth century, and many people will first think of bizarre Decadent poets eulogizing the Evil One in verse. The notion of the Decadent as the archetypal Satanist was widespread already at the time, as was the perceived connection between Decadence (as an artistic-literary genre and a countercultural lifestyle) and femmes fatales (real and fictional). This chapter will discuss Decadent treatments of Satan (pro-Satanic and not) and how they interlock with the genre's demonic women. Decadence, however, is also of more general importance for our topic.

Why is that, then? It has been considered a commonplace that 'the master trope of decadence is inversion', and no text supposedly proves this better

than J.-K. Huysmans's novel *À rebours* ('Against the Grain', 1884), famously designated 'the breviary of Decadence' by influential poet and critic Arthur Symons (1865–1945). According to Barbara Spackman, it lines 'itself up on the culturally devalued side of a series of familiar oppositions—feminine vs. masculine, degeneration vs. evolution, decadence vs. progress, sickness vs. health, artifice vs. nature, false vs. true, perversion vs. normalcy'.[2] This central Decadent tactic of inverting, counter-reading, and challenging hegemonic symbols, values, and semantics makes the genre crucial for a proper contextualization of the hermeneutics of Satanic feminism. Counter-hegemonic, and more or less feminist, interpretations of the motif of woman as the Devil's chosen one can only be comprehended fully if approached as part of a broader tendency—in which Decadence played a pivotal role—to apply such techniques. The Decadents can be seen as further radicalizing the reworkings of mythological motifs that Romantics engaged in, and making this "contrary" attitude to symbolic and semantic systems an almost all-encompassing world view. Aside from this, a thorough examination of Decadence is also necessary here because some of the central source texts discussed further on in the study belong to this genre and can only be understood when seen against this particular background.

The chapter commences with a discussion of Decadence as a highly visible counter-discourse, which popularized tactics of counter-reading (among other things with anti-Christian purposes). A number of examples of Decadent Satanism and works treating literally demonic women are considered throughout this exploration. These women are all subversive, and quite often explicitly a threat to patriarchal structures, but the depictions only occasionally have an approving tone. Subsequently, the works of a pictorial artist and two authors are more exhaustively analysed. First, Félicien Rops's enthusiastically debauched engravings and paintings of Satanic women are examined. Next, we will look at J.-K. Huysmans's novel *Là-bas* ('Down There', 1891), and the female Satanist Mme Chantelouve who is portrayed in it. As will be shown, this character had a rather tangled connection to real women who inspired Huysmans when he created her, and to ones that were in turn inspired by the figure. Mme Chantelouve is also, as I shall demonstrate, interconnected with contemporary ideas about hysteria and so-called free love, phenomena that were linked to feminism and less overtly political forms of female rebellion and subversion. Finally, I will discuss Stanislaw Przybyszewski's *Die Synagoge des Satan* ('The Synagogue of Satan', 1897),

a Satanic manifesto masquerading as a passionately Decadent historical monograph. Przybyszewski had a highly ambivalent attitude towards the demonic feminine, but in view of his œuvre at large it is difficult to read his at times quite ghastly descriptions of female Satanists as simple condemnations. Although the genre, as we will see, certainly tended to destabilize supposedly fixed gender categories, there is scant evidence of feminist content in Decadence as a whole. In the case of many artists and authors, however, an ambivalence can be observed, and the fascination with the demonic feminine—including satanically independent women—at times turns into a celebration of such figures.

'I TOOK IT UP AS A WAR CRY': THE TRAJECTORY OF DECADENCE FROM ATTRIBUTION TO IDENTIFICATION

According to a common version of the tale, the epithet *decadent* was first applied to literature in Théophile Gautier's preface to the 1868 edition of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* ('The Flowers of Evil').[3] However, decadence as an adjective describing a form of literature had in fact appeared in print long before this, for example, in the preface to Charles Nodier's *Contes fantastiques* ('Fantastic Tales', 1850).[4] Baudelaire himself also used it in an 1857 essay to characterize, in an approving tone, the works of Edgar Allan Poe.[5] Scholars have dated the actual introduction of this word into French aesthetic discourse even earlier, with the critic Désiré Nisard's 1834 book *Etudes de mœurs et de critique sur les poètes latins de la décadence* ('Moral and Critical Studies of the Latin Poets of the Decadence').[6] The conservative Nisard here attacks Romantic literature, especially Victor Hugo, as "decadent" by highlighting supposed similarities to works from the late Roman Empire that he held in very low esteem.[7] Eventually, the word was picked up as a defiant self-description by the very sort of literary figures it was meant to denigrate, many of whom perceived themselves as inheritors of Baudelaire's legacy in some sense.[8] In a newspaper interview, the controversial avant-garde poet Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) explained, 'People were throwing it at us as an insult, that epithet; I took it up as a war cry.'[9] Elsewhere, he declared, 'I love this word decadent—all shimmering in purple and gold', and further explicated, 'It

suggests the subtle thoughts of ultimate civilization, a high literary culture, a soul capable of intense pleasures.'[10]

Elitism, as Verlaine's phrasings suggest, was very much part of the persona of the self-identified Decadents—they held themselves up as the pinnacle of sophistication. In Irish author George Moore's autobiographical novel *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), which describes his life in 1870s Paris under the influence of early Decadent literature, the protagonist rails against 'the blind, inchoate, insatiate Mass' and proclaims that in the present age of decline 'the snob is now the ark that floats triumphant over the democratic wave'.[11] From early on, we should note, there was also a collapsing of the distance between this elitist group and what Jerrold Seigel characterizes as 'the opposite theater of self-dramatization, Bohemia', which made things quite jumbled in terms of actual class background and monetary resources.[12] Decadent dandies could be both impoverished bohemians with a lower middle-class background (which did not stop them from spending large sums on opulent dress and works of art, often making them end up in debt because of their expensive tastes) or wealthy aristocratic dabblers in poetry like Count Robert de Montesquiou (1855–1921).

Decadence was not only a literary concept. From the very start, it was intertwined with its use in a fin-de-siècle discourse on a perceived general biological and societal decline. In England, for example, it was employed in such a sense as early as 1837. This feeling of living in the last of days of society as we know it would become especially acute in France, which in the second half of the nineteenth century had very specific historical reasons—among them the defeat in the 1870 war against Prussia—to feel its international power and prestige were waning.[13] Ideas about the inevitable transfer of biological defects from one generation to the next further darkened the mood of the time, and this was, as Jean Pierrot puts it, 'accepted all the more readily because it provided a sort of a posteriori justification for the Christian notion of original sin'.[14] Self-identified Decadent authors and artists turned such pessimist discourse—as it was employed regarding literature as well as other things—on its head and saw themselves as the final product of a cultural evolution into ever more refined forms of epicurean appreciation of sensual pleasure and elaborate, sophisticated art (and dress!). Yet, in spite of this embrace of the term as in some sense positive and appealing, there always remained a considerable ambiguity in

the way the loose Decadent movement in Paris, and its later equivalents elsewhere in Europe, related to the concept.

Although there had existed tendencies in this direction earlier, the publication of Huysmans's *À Rebours* in 1884 can be seen as the starting point of Decadence as a self-recognized genre in some sense. Despite being both satirical and critical of the lifestyle it describes, this novel functioned in many ways as a manual on how to be a proper Decadent: what to eat, read, and how to decorate one's home. In 1886 the review *Le Décadent* was founded, and regular contributors included Verlaine and Jean Lorrain (1855–1906). It strove to be controversial, and for many of those involved this was a conscious tactic of self-advertisement. This journal, and the comparable ones that also sprung up (e.g. the similarly named *La Décadence*), did not have a wide circulation, but still popularized a new aesthetic and philosophical approach, which soon spread to most other major European capitals.[15] In London, the periodical named *The Yellow Book* (1894–1897) became, not entirely correctly, seen as a mouthpiece for Decadence, mostly because of the provocative and unorthodox illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898).[16] Due to the international nature of Decadence, I will here treat it as a phenomenon with prominence and some coherence not only in France but all over Europe (though there are, of course, important regional differences, which will be acknowledged where relevant).

The use of the word as a self-description in France was a fairly brief trend, and it is often seen as an early stage, lasting from around 1880 to 1887, of what was later called Symbolism.[17] The latter would, according to this view, be a more positive, life-affirming and consistent version of the former. As Jean Pierrot and others have demonstrated, this is an oversimplification. Decadence, in fact, lives on well after its supposed death, and cannot be reduced to the purely negative stereotypes some critics have associated it with.[18] Further, Decadence continued to be a self-understanding valid for authors in other countries even after the 1880s. In Germany, for example, there was Stanislaw Przybyszewski, who swore by the Decadent creed during his Berlin years in the 1890s (and partly continued to do so when he later moved to Krakow). Later, Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871–1943), among others, continued cultivating the German flowers of evil in literature.[19]

Moreover, according to Jerrold Seigel, '[s]ymbolists and decadents were in many cases the same people, changing labels after the term "Symbolism"

was popularised in a series of manifestos during 1886'.[20] This was reflected also in critical literature on the topic, most famously in the change of title of Arthur Symons's 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', first published as an article under this heading in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1893 and then advertised as a forthcoming book with the same name in 1896, but ending up being published as *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* in 1899, when Decadence had become too provocative a term in England (in the wake of the 1895 trial against Oscar Wilde). The basic aesthetic and philosophical sensibility was frequently the same even when the labels changed. Whereas Symbolism may be defined as having a strong focus on allegorical representations and—unsurprisingly—symbols (something largely derived from Baudelaire's conception of correspondences), it shared many thematic concerns with Decadence. This being said, Symbolism was clearly much more likely to include optimistic representations of angelic figures and blissful transcendence instead of depicting demons and sensual, earthly pleasures as Decadents were highly prone to do.[21] In a way, it is perhaps possible to see Decadence as a continuously present dark twin of Symbolism, much like the Gothic genre is to Romanticism. However, we must also remember, as with the Gothic and the Romantic, that the two often overlap and intertwine: the most obsessively "dark" texts often hold some element of light, and vice versa.

SUBVERSIVE OR CONSERVATIVE? THE AMBIGUOUS COUNTER-DISCOURSE OF DECADENCE

We may now ask what, exactly, the approach and attitude of the Decadents was towards the cultural dissolution the term designates? This question has been debated for a long time. Some scholars (e.g. Asti Hustvedt) have asserted that the work of these writers 'can only be read as a celebration of the fall'.[22] In a similar manner, Decadence was commonly perceived by the public and conservative critics in the nineteenth century as a discourse inverting hegemonic cultural values. The adoption of a pejorative term as a self-description understandably helped foster an understanding of it as a loose ideology where that which is decayed, aberrant, sinful, and lustful is elevated, and the commonplace, wholesome, virtuous, and decent is mocked and derided. In short, its detractors and even some of its propagators (notably Przybyszewski)—and, later, some scholars as well—saw it as a

rather crudely straightforward counter-discourse to bourgeois morality and aesthetics. Things are not, however, quite so simple at all times.

Most of the so-called Decadents, even those who themselves accepted this label with pride, held a great many opinions that were not at all in opposition to bourgeois culture. They too were racists, imperialists, nationalists, sexists, despised the lower classes, and so on. The major point of disagreement with majority culture was the Decadents' hatred of capitalism and mercantilism, which, however, generally did not spring from a sympathy for workers at the bottom of this system, but from an idealist conviction that lofty values (or, at least, a more refined sensualism) rather than a mundane longing for wealth should govern life. Here, of course, they were partly in agreement with, for example, many conservative Catholics and reactionaries longing for the days of the *ancien régime*.[23] Indeed, several Decadents were or later became practising Catholics, and belonged to—or wished, or pretended, to belong to—the aristocracy. This often tied in with an espousal of conservative or even reactionary views. Democracy and egalitarianism were rejected by most Decadents. 'Art is the antithesis to democracy,' George Moore exclaims in his memoirs.[24] A more prominent example of this attitude is Italy's main Decadent author, Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938). This 'John the Baptist of fascism' considered his proto-fascist political and military activities and his Decadent writing integrated parts of the same project.[25] He later became a somewhat problematic figure for Mussolini, and writers of d'Annunzio's kind largely tended to straddle the fence between hard-line conservatism and an eccentric, individualistic radicalism that was difficult to incorporate into any mass ideology.

Aside from the equality of all, another favourite enemy of the Decadents was secularism. The proposed alternative was, however, seldom anything along the lines of, let us say, a mild, mellow, and well-adjusted Christian belief. Instead, Decadents were typically anticlerical and highly idiosyncratic in their religious convictions. As just mentioned, Catholicism was still the religion of choice for most of them, even those from Protestant countries and families. Their approach to it, though, was usually more or less unconventional and outrageous, with the extravagant ritualism and perceived 'anachronism' (which they found poetical and appealing as an antidote to the deplorably vulgar present) of Catholicism being among the most attractive aspects to them. Religious terminology often framed the recurring Decadent tirades condemning the decay of propriety and culture in general, a rhetoric

where they emphasized they were not libertines and destructive revolutionaries relishing this development, but reactionaries weeping over it. In the literature that was classified as Decadent in the nineteenth century, and is still being grouped together under this heading, we can in fact find both attitudes. This is discernible even in the œuvre of the individual authors. Many of them tend to be quite ambivalent about libertinism, liberalism, epicureanism, immoderate refinement, and unconventional bohemian lifestyles—both allured by such things and denouncing them, or embracing some elements of this kind (we can here note that homo- or bisexuality was not uncommon among Decadents, with Lorrain and Verlaine as well-known examples) and simultaneously championing many old-fashioned values.[26] A considerable amount of hypocrisy is undoubtedly often involved, and at times it seems fitting to paraphrase Blake's famous words about Milton: in some issues, these authors were of the Devil's party and knew it fully well—but did not want to acknowledge it publicly.

In an interesting article, Alice R. Kaminsky asks if the Decadents wrote 'to condemn a decaying civilization or [to] offer a new liberating morality'.[27] Following this line of enquiry, we could also ask: Is something best defined as Decadent based on the fact that certain themes and motifs are depicted, or based on the presence of a certain attitude (more or less positive and romanticizing) towards these themes and motifs? My answer to these queries, as already stated, postulates that we can find both attitudinal varieties within Decadence. Some authors veer more clearly towards one or the other, but most exhibit a considerable ambivalence, which may be constant or with a varying emphasis on either position at different points in their writing careers (or even in a single work). This pronounced ambivalence (or enthusiastic embrace, in some cases), however, is crucial for a work to be Decadent, rather than to constitute a text about Decadence (with or without a capital *D*).[28]

As we have seen, there are some scholars of Decadence who claim that the authors belonging to this current set out to topple the established order by wholeheartedly embracing the dark side. Literary scholar Asti Hustvedt asserts that they 'aestheticized decay and took pleasure in perversity'.[29] This much is true, but we need to keep in mind that this fascination was often hypocritically framed in a highly moralistic discourse, precisely like when late eighteenth-century Gothic authors such as Lewis and Beckford wallow in gruesome descriptions of violence, demonism, and debauchery whilst

claiming they write to warn and edify the public. To assume that such predilections automatically entail a conscious effort to subvert middle-class values seems ill-founded. Some so-called Decadents may have been quite honest in their moralist attitude, with their extensive treatments of 'forbidden' topics best described as something of a guilty pleasure. Hustvedt seems to exclude this possibility and makes the Decadents out to be revolutionaries: 'In decadent literature sickness is preferable to health, not only because sickness was regarded as more interesting, but because sickness was construed as subversive, as a threat to the very fabric of society. By embracing the marginal, the unhealthy, and the deviant, the decadents attacked bourgeois life.'[30] Hustvedt acknowledges, however, that Decadents lacked any kind of shared political platform other than hostility to the bourgeoisie, a penchant for elitism, and a deep animosity towards democracy. They were often extremists on either the left or the right—militant monarchists or rabid anarchists, anything that demonstrated their distance from the vulgar mass of men.[31]

But were they really, as Hustvedt claims, determined to tear to pieces 'the very fabric of society'? Matei Calinescu, in his well-known book *Five Faces of Modernity* (1977), has argued that Decadents belonged to a category of intellectuals which 'relished the feeling that the modern world was headed towards catastrophe', and he sees them as 'conscious promoters of an aesthetic modernity that was, in spite of all its ambiguities, radically opposed to the other, essentially bourgeois, modernity, with its promises of indefinite progress, democracy, generalized sharing of "the comforts of civilization," etc'. To the Decadent, Calinescu contends, these promises appeared 'as so many demagogical diversions from the terrible reality of increasing spiritual alienation and dehumanization'. Therefore, he proposes, they 'cultivated the consciousness of their *own* alienation, both aesthetic and moral'.[32] However, many of them felt tormented by the modern condition and emphatically did not, as Calinescu claims, relish the supposedly impending downfall of the West. Some did, but it was rare for this to assume programmatic form. One exception is when the founder of *Le Décadent*, Anatole Baju, explained to his readers that Decadence is awareness and acceptance of modernity, and should be progressive. He further aligned it with scientific advances: 'We ought to have a language and a literature in harmony with the progress of science. … And is this what is called decadence? Let it be decadence. We accept the word. We are decadent, since

this decadence is nothing but the ascending march of humanity toward ideals which are reputed to be inaccessible.'[33] In other words: decadence, the rotting away of the present society and its mores, is necessary for true progress. So much for the bold programme drawn up in *Le Décadent*. A few years later, Baju would lament that his former literary friends had turned out to be of a more reactionary persuasion and were unwilling to join him in the project to weaken 'the base of the social structure', where he envisioned some of them 'would have attacked ownership, religion, the family, others would have ridiculed marriage, and advocated free love'.[34] Most of them, it had turned out, were very interested in depicting attacks on religion, for example, in the form of Black Masses, and creating characters that practised free love and spurned traditional family life, like Huysmans's Mme Chantelouve. Actually propagating or carrying out such things was another matter entirely.

DELINEATING DECADENCE

If there is no coherent agenda behind Decadent writing—texts like Baju's proclamations being something of an aberration—how do we define it? Is there a Decadent ideology of sorts after all or even a central set of motifs? Some have found the term *Decadence* so problematic and elusive that they suggest discarding it.[35] In spite of how difficult it is to pin down, I nevertheless find it useful. There is little doubt in my mind that there existed a recognizable genre in the late nineteenth century that went under this name, and that it is fruitful to attempt a clarification of its configuration. Cevasco has suggested a number of distinguishing characteristics, some of which have already figured in my initial delineation, that include the following:

> a scorn for contemporary society and its mores; an interest in the artificial, the morbid, the perverse; a search for novelty and the exploration of the dark underside of experience; a sadness of sorts and a measure of unwholesomeness; sensuality and self-indulgence followed by dissatisfaction and ennui; a tendency to stress form and to slight content; use of imagery that springs from art rather than from nature; a finical glorification of all the arts; the complete and wholehearted acceptance of art for art's sake.[36]

While I agree that all this is typical of Decadent works (though I am hesitant regarding the supposed universality of a 'scorn for contemporary society and its mores' in the genre, although the depiction of such scorn is omnipresent), I

would also add some things and specify some aspects further. First, regarding art for art's sake, this entails that aesthetic categories tend to be divorced from moral ones in the genre: that which is evil can be deemed "good" because it is beautiful, an attitude having continuity with the Romantic view of the sublime. Secondly, elitism is an important feature, which is further intimately tied up with a harshly negative view of the contemporary age as either too moralistically stifling or too morally lax, but either way decidedly lacking in aesthetic taste. Huysmans's aristocratic and snobbish protagonist des Esseintes, for example, repeatedly expresses his hatred of the democracy, crudeness, capitalism, and mercantilism of his age.[37]

In an overtly minimalist move, Simon Wilson defines Decadence simply as art 'characterised by a special emphasis on sexuality and death'.[38] I would here add that the Decadent speciality was a perverse intertwining of the two, not merely either of them treated separately. The question here arises why these themes were so prominent in Decadent works. Wilson suggests the stressing of sexuality represented a sort of sensuous rebellion against the materialistic, efficient, and utilitarian society that had evolved after the Industrial Revolution, an interpretation that I find persuasive. The preoccupation with death is in his opinion a reflection of despair at Mammon worship and a perceived imminent end of civilization. All this converged in the Decadent view of woman, who 'is no longer a victim, as she had been in the art of the Romantics', but 'an independent creature using her sexuality to dominate men', and 'has about her an aura of the grave'.[39] The femme fatale, then, should be added to the list of central Decadent motifs (we will return to this figure).

There are also observable peculiarities of style in Decadence. Charles Bernheimer writes: 'Decadent style is artificial, ornamental, superficial, decorative. It fetishizes the particularized detail at the expense of the organic whole. It is a style of decomposition and disintegration.'[40] Ellis Hanson similarly characterizes it as 'fraught with disruption, fragmentation, and paradox', with 'a tendency to vague and mystical language, a longing to wring from words an enigmatic symbolism or a perverse irony'.[41] To these apt characterizations, I would like to add that Decadent discourse typically employs some sort of semantic inversion. This could be seen as a trait existing on the threshold between theme and style. The very revaluation of

the word *decadence* is an obvious example, and celebration of Satan another. One Decadent who presents especially sustained arguments of inversion is the aforementioned Stanislaw Przybyszewski. He constantly turns established values on their head, abruptly shifting the usual meaning of words and mythical figures like Satan. A typical example is how Przybyszewski dismisses the common use of the word *degeneration* (*Entartung*) as nonsense and claims that this phenomenon, which nineteenth-century medical science considers a threat to mankind, is simply a recurring and necessary stage in the development of our species. According to him, the degenerate—characterized by 'nervous oversensitivity' and 'psychotic fever conditions'—is in fact a genius, a herald of progress. The real dregs of humanity are those who attack degeneracy in the species and Decadence in literature and art.[42]

Bringing together these traits highlighted by earlier scholarship—which I, based on my own comprehensive reading in the genre, believe are the most commonly recurring in works that were frequently designated Decadent at the time (by their authors or by others)—the tentative definition I will employ is the following: *The Decadent genre displays an ambivalent preoccupation with themes like artificiality, pessimism, transgression, and darkness. Sexuality and death are typically intertwined, and femmes fatales are recurring figures. Elitism permeates the texts, which are usually distinguished by a degree of semantic inversion. Style and art are lauded as supreme values, and the manner of writing tends to be vague, fragmented, ornamental, and embellished.* All this should be taken as a stipulation of a set of Wittgensteinian family resemblances rather than a rigid list of intrinsic characteristics present in every work commonly counted as part of the genre. As we have seen, Decadence was not only a literary genre but also an attitude or even a subculture of sorts. It is often unclear where the eccentric attitudes of literary characters end and those of the authors begin. The diffuse boundary between Decadence as a work of art and as a lifestyle or persona will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Having arrived at this provisional delineation of the central traits of the texts, it is probably obvious that many works published several decades before the term became established also display this family resemblance. Baudelaire, constantly quoted as the major source of inspiration by the later authors, is a given example, as are certain works by Théophile Gautier (see chapter 5). Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* ('Venus in Furs',

1870) and other novels by him also display a close kinship to Decadence. We can further think of some of the products of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (founded in 1848) and its successors in Great Britain (Pre-Raphaelite depictions of witches have been considered in chapter 6, and Rossetti's famous Lilith painting and related poems will be analysed further on in this chapter). Much Gothic writing, for example William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), also fulfils several of the criteria, as do quite a few Romantic works from a variety of countries. The Decadent sensibility, then, clearly stretches backwards in time, a continuity that has been discussed thoroughly in Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* (1933).[43] It is also indicated by Huysmans's listing of various predecessors—for example, Baudelaire and the painter Gustave Moreau (1826–1898)—in *À Rebours*. When the term is used here, however, it primarily refers to the works that came after this sensibility coalesced into a recognizable and self-conscious current around 1880. This genre continued to yield its corrupt literary harvest in abundance at least until the outbreak of World War I, as well as, to a lesser degree, even later.

'A CLASS OF POETRY TO THE DEVIL'? DECADENCE AND RELIGION

The problem of 'the death of God' (and the resulting loss of fixed metaphysical and ethical values) has been suggested as a typical Decadent preoccupation, but the exact way of dealing with the issue at hand is harder to pin down.[44] Kaminsky asks, 'Is decadence really a manifestation of a deep religious concern or is it the means by which man's will confronts and defies nature?'[45] Again, the answer is, in my opinion: both. It is impossible to make a general statement about the attitude towards religion of all the authors typically labelled Decadent. Some of them were atheists or sceptics, some deeply devout (though usually quite unconventional) Catholics, others esotericists. It is notable that—as already mentioned—several Decadents, even those from a Protestant background, eventually found their way into the fold of the Catholic Church. To name but a few, we can think of Aubrey Beardsley, Renée Vivien, and J.-K. Huysmans (the last-mentioned, of course, did not come from a Protestant family). The only real unifying factor when it comes to Decadent religiosity or non-religiosity seems to be a fascination with the ritualism and opulent trappings of religion. This is less than

surprising, given that costumes and decorations were a typical Decadent preoccupation.

In some cases, the aesthetic obsession with religion could evolve into peculiar ritual practices as well. The minor Decadent author Count Eric Stanislaus Stenbock (1860–1895), for example, built a strange altar in his London home and devised a personal theology that mingled Buddhism, 'idolatry', and Catholicism.[46] The painter Simeon Solomon reported that on one of his visits to the Count, he witnessed his host 'swinging a silver censer before an altar covered with lilies, myrtles, lighted candles and a sanctuary lamp covered with scented oil'.[47] We can find similar specimens of aesthetic altars all over Europe, if perhaps with less actual ritual practice involved. For instance, Belgian painter Fernand Khnopff's house in Brussels contained an altar dedicated to Hypnos.[48] His German colleague Franz von Stuck (1863–1928) erected an altar to sin in his Munich villa (more about this later). Altars of this kind, dedicated to sin or somewhat sinister antique deities like Hypnos, made the home a temple of sorts. They are typical of the conflation of private, artistic, and religious life recurring in these circles. In the case of Félicien Rops (1833–1898), the artist cultivated a diabolical persona and even portrayed himself as the Devil (this too will be treated in more detail presently). The same merging of the artist with the evil he portrays is also observable in the case of Gustav-Adolf Mossa's (1883–1971) serpent-entwined self-portrait and in the demonic posing of Przybyszewski, who was fond of enacting the role of Satan.[49] In a way, such self-portraits and role-playing function as a sort of jocular declaration of being of the Devil's party, and at the very least contradict artists' claims to be moralists condemning Satanism and demonic femmes fatales.

What about outright Satanism in Decadence, then? The contemporary view was that there definitely existed some sort of connection between the two. Decadence could even be held up as literally Satanic, as in the main work of anti-Decadence, the Austrian physician and journalist Max Nordau's *Entartung* ('Degeneration', 1892).[50] Satanism figures prominently in Nordau's pathologization of the genre, which aims to demonstrate how the decline of the race can be discerned in the deplorable immorality of contemporary literature and art. Nordau's lengthy rant was translated into several languages and became one of the bestselling books in Europe in the 1890s. Inadvertently, it not only managed to whip up a moral panic but also

publicized the writers and artists he attacked, raising international awareness of them as a "school" and probably increasing the sales of previously obscure authors.[51] Nordau repeatedly brings up Satanism as typical of Decadence, claiming, for example, about the Pre-Raphaelites' successors, 'the hysterical and degenerate', that they 'have with Swinburne eulogized unnatural license, crime, hell, and the devil'.[52] This basic analysis shows even in his accounts of the appearance of Decadents. For instance, he quotes a description saying Verlaine looks like a 'wicked angel grown old'.[53] Many of these artists and authors, he assures us, are ego-maniacs (*Ichsüchtigen*).[54] Such a person 'has a decided predilection for evil, esteems it in others, does it himself every time he can act according to his inclination, and finds in it the peculiar beauty that the sane man finds in good'.[55] Nordau goes on to explain that ' "Diaboliques" and "decadents" are distinguished from ordinary criminals merely in that the former content themselves with dreaming and writing'.[56] Discussing the Parnassian poets (a literary current that counted among its contributors Verlaine, Mallarmé, and others who were later involved with Decadence), he assures us that 'they are only cold and indifferent towards good, not towards evil; the latter attracts them … and fills them as much with feelings of pleasure, as the good attracts and rejoices the sane majority of men'.[57] In a long and detailed discussion of Baudelaire, he asserts that the generally aberrant nature of an author like this, when mingled with 'that mysticism which is never wanting in the degenerate' leads inevitably to Satanism: 'Naturally, the love of evil can only take the form of devil-worship, or diabolism, if the subject is a believer, if the supernatural is held to be a real thing.'[58] Nordau brusquely dismisses the poet's denial of being a Satanist: 'The assertion of Baudelaire himself, that his Satanism is only a studied *rôle*, has no sort of value whatever.'[59] A claim like this 'does not deceive the psychologist', who knows that, whatever he says, Baudelaire is a Satanist.[60] Next, Nordau identifies and condemns a number of writers who, he says, have followed Baudelaire in celebrating Satan: Jean Richepin, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and Barbey d'Aurevilly. The latter two, he claims, 'created a class of poetry to the devil, which recalls the craziest depositions of witches of the Middle Ages when put to the torture'. In Barbey's *Les Diaboliques*, he states, 'men and women wallow in the most hideous license, continually invoking the devil, extolling and serving him'.[61] This, then, was the view of Decadence being spread to a wide audience. In no uncertain

terms, Nordau explained to them that authors of this kind were Devil-worshippers, even if they denied it, and extolled evil. This analysis, of course, is a caricature of the crudest kind, but it was widely accepted, especially by those who had not themselves really read the supposedly Satanic authors in question.

Whatever Nordau says, none of these writers could be labelled Satanists. There are, for example, no literal invocations of Satan in Barbey's *Les Diaboliques*.[62] A striking thing in most Decadent texts, from proto-Decadent works like those of Baudelaire in the 1850s to the late works of Hanns Heinz Ewers in the 1920s, is that the semantic inversion—evil is good, pain pleasurable, decadence laudable rather than a thing to battle, and so on—is not carried through with complete consistency. This also applies to Decadent Satanism, the insurrectionary intentions of which were rather exaggerated by Nordau and later by some scholars as well. Simon Wilson, for example, claims that Decadents perceived Satan as a symbol of 'freedom from, and opposition to, the restrictions placed on man by the Christian God and reflected in the institutions of Christian countries'.[63] This is correct to some extent, but Wilson omits to mention that Decadents were typically highly ambivalent about the desirability of such absolute freedom. In fact, not all Decadents (quite few, in reality) held a great deal of sympathy for the Devil. Certain English Romantics, wavering as they were, had in fact been more consistent in their Luciferian leanings as well as their revolutionary convictions. Decadents were moreover often fascinated with Satan as a symbol of evil and sin, rather than an icon of righteous rebellion against a church hostile to progress. Here, they were basically following the double nature of the figure delineated by Baudelaire.

In his most famous Satanic piece, 'Les Litanies de Satan' (in *Les Fleurs du mal*, 'The Flowers of Evil', 1857), Baudelaire regurgitates motifs from Romantic Satanism but with the added twist of actually addressing the Devil in a formally structured prayer. He is supplicated by the poet as a healer of mankind's anxieties, but there is a distinct ambiguity throughout, which is even more emphasized than in the works of the Romantics. Satan is connected with death, and in his function as a cultural hero he has brought us knowledge of saltpetre and sulphur, that is, he taught us how to make gunpowder—perhaps not the kindest of acts. He may be the protector of the outcasts and the downtrodden, but the gifts he has brought mankind are quite suspicious. Even so, the poem is unabashedly pro-Satanic (though this could

be read as ironic), and its refrain is 'O Satan, take pity on my long misery!'.[64] It ends with praising Satan as the god of wisdom and referring to the myth of the Fall:

> Glory and praise to you, Satan, in the heights
> Of Heaven, where you reigned, and in the depths
> Of Hell, where, vanquished, you dream in silence!
> Make it so that my soul, one day, beneath the Tree of Knowledge,
> Rests next to you, at the hour when upon your brow
> Like a new temple its branches spread![65]

In a poem added to the posthumous 1868 third edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*, 'L'Examen de minuit' ('Midnight Examination'), Baudelaire expresses regret at having blasphemed Christ and celebrated Satan. He states that we (the poet himself) have 'Insulted what we love / And have flattered what repels us'.[66] This reflects a Catholic sense of guilt that permeates much of his writing, and which has made many critics and scholars (especially Christians) view him as devout at his core, in spite of the many provocations towards Christianity and morality that he produced.[67] We need not attempt to sort out this complicated matter here, and it can be left at the fact that Baudelaire is far from a straightforward Satanist.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the view of Satan as a benevolent liberator that Wilson describes lived on in the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, in the rhetoric of socialists. However, as mentioned, many so-called Decadents were reactionary, not socialist or liberal. Accordingly, Satan the emancipator is not consistently present. Decadents liked to provoke and shock their readers, and, it seems, themselves. Satan primarily serves this function for them, not that of an allegorical figure to help promote the freedom of mankind. In this context, Satan can therefore at times assume an almost comically banal bogey man role, as in the poem 'La Dame en cire' ('The Wax Lady', from *Les Névroses*, 'The Neuroses', 1883), where the minor Decadent Maurice Rollinat (1846–1903) (figure 7.1) implores the Devil to bring to him a female wax figure come to life:

> O thou who has so often visited me,
> Satan! old king of perversity,
> Bestow upon me the grace, o sulphurous Lord,

At the mournful toll of midnight,
To see the wax lady enter my house![68]

On some occasions, however, Satanism is used more earnestly to express *Zeitkritik* and attack conservative values, along the lines of the Romantic use of Satan, but now with a stronger emphasis on the Devil as a protector of sensualism rather than of reason. Aside from Renée Vivien, who will be discussed in chapter 8, Przybyszewski is again the best example of someone using this tactic consistently. In Sweden, Emil Kléen (1868–1898), one of few truly committed Scandinavian Decadents, wrote 'Pans fest' ('Pan's Feast', in the collection *Vildvin och vallmo*, 'Woodbine and Poppy', 1895). The Greek god is here conflated with Satan ('You call me *Sathanas*— / *That* name I am proud to bear') and the author's hatred of Christianity as an oppressor of sensual joy flows freely.[69] Pan-Satan lures nuns to sexual pleasures in the forest and entices young women to be unfaithful to their elderly husbands. The figure, which is portrayed in a strongly positive manner, here functions as a sexual liberator, convincing women to rebel against male authority (the nuns against God the Father, the wives against their husbands).[70]

FIGURE 7.1 Maurice Rollinat (1846–1903), a minor Decadent who used Satan and demonic women figures in highly stereotypical ways.

When looking at late nineteenth-century French culture, the most stable flow of pro-Satanic works in fact did not emanate from the pen of any Decadent, but from that of the light-hearted late Romantic Anatole France, discussed in chapter 3. Most French Decadents only produced isolated Satanic pieces. This was sufficient for the genre to be associated with such themes anyway, but none of the authors can be seen as consistent Satanists in any sense. Such a figure could, however, be found in Berlin at this time: Stanislaw Przybyszewski, who will be considered in detail later in this

chapter. Suffice to say here, Przybyszewski formulated what is probably the first attempt ever to construct a more or less systematic Satanism. Teasingly, he writes in his memoirs about his own adoration of the Devil: 'Satanism without the theft of sacramental wafers, without even the blood of premature babies—what a plain, boring and prosaic Satanism!'[71] If we are to briefly encapsulate this 'plain, boring and prosaic' teaching, the core themes are a pessimistic view of human existence as bleak and painful, the primacy of sexual lust, a nihilist anarchist will to destruction, and, lastly and most important, a celebration of evolution anchored in theories concerning the survival of the fittest. Przybyszewski's Satanism, then, was completely tangled up with the propagation of a merciless evolutionism. Other Decadents could also espouse anti-Christian attitudes—albeit not Satanic ones—as part of an elitist world view where the survival of the fittest was the highest law. George Moore describes his outlook during his Decadent phase as follows:

> Pity, that most vile of all virtues, has never been known to me. The great pagan world I love knew it not. Now the world proposes to interrupt the terrible austere laws of nature which ordain that the weak shall be trampled upon, shall be ground into death and dust, that the strong shall be really strong,—that the strong shall be glorious, sublime. A little bourgeois comfort, a little bourgeois sense of right, cry the moderns. Hither the world has been drifting since the coming of the pale socialist of Galilee; and this is why I hate Him, and deny His divinity.[72]

This is the exact ethos that is explicitly connected with Satanism in several works by Przybyszewski and also in Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen's novel *Messes noires* ('Black Masses', 1905).[73] In this, Decadent Satanism plainly differs from its egalitarian Romantic and socialist counterparts.

To summarize, Satanism was a topic that captivated many Decadents, but, as we will see, the most famous prose description of Satanic rites, Huysmans's *Là-bas*, emphasizes the author's disgust more than it expresses any approval. Huysmans had treated Devil worship already in *À Rebours*. As Enid Starkie points out, and as has been mentioned, *À Rebours* 'more than any other work, helped to crystallize the conception of the Aesthete and the Decadent'.[74] Interestingly, it clearly presents a fascination with religion in general and Satanism in particular as an integral element of the Decadent identity. Indeed, many Decadent treatments of religion after 1884 are simply examples of people following the charter set down by Huysmans. His anti-hero des Esseintes has certain religious doubts and finds the aesthetics of

Catholicism appealing.[75] The thrills offered by the church, however, also have a black mirror image that holds an attraction at least as powerful:

> the artistic sense was subjugated\ by those carefully orchestrated Catholic scenes; these memories sent a shiver through his nerves but then, in a sudden rebellion, in a rapid reversal, monstrous ideas sprung up in him, ideas of those sacrileges provided for in the confessor's manual, shameful and impure abuses of the holy water and the holy oil. In the face of an omnipotent God there now arose a rival full of vigour, the Devil, and it seemed to him that a dreadful grandeur must result from a crime carried out, in the midst of a church, by a believer who, filled with horrible delight, and completely sadistic joy, persisted in blaspheming, committing outrages upon revered objects, to cover them with shame: then the follies of magic, Black Masses, sabbaths, terror of possession and of exorcism arose.[76]

Des Esseintes finds such stimulation in his collection of Goya prints. This artist enthrals him 'by his dizzying scenes, by his witches riding on cats, … his succubi, his devils and his dwarfs' (in this enthusiasm—as in so many other respects—he echoes Baudelaire, who also waxed lyrical over this imagery in Goya's art).[77] Later, des Esseintes reflects that sacrilege, 'which depends on the very existence of a religion, cannot be intentionally and appositely committed except by a believer, for a man would experience no delight in profaning a law which he did not care about or know'.[78] This oft-repeated view (which many scholars have adopted as well) is, however, in my opinion not the truism it might appear to be.[79] There can logically be a great degree of pleasure in blaspheming something others find holy, either just out of a sadistic urge to hurt them, or in order to symbolically attack their religious system and its values. Satanism, which comes in many varieties, is not necessarily a confirmation of Christianity as somehow valid, and—as we have seen with Bakunin, for example—certainly does not automatically entail that the person who utilizes a Satanic discourse is somehow a crypto-Christian. Yet, it is undoubtedly titillating in a special way for oneself if some vestiges of belief in the sanctity of the church remain. The Decadent fascination with Catholicism can to a certain degree also be seen in this light: proclaiming oneself a Catholic, or even trying to convince oneself this is the case, makes it more exciting to blaspheme and sin.

DECADENT MISOGYNY, ANDROGYNY, AND DEMONIC WOMEN

Some scholars have wanted to analyse the femmes fatales so frequent in Decadence as largely a reaction to a threat men felt was posed by the New

Woman. Aside from this development in gender roles, it has been suggested such vilification of woman is an inevitable outcome of the basic Decadent world view. Jean Pierrot views the dislike of nature and praise of artifice among Decadents as logically leading to 'antifeminism, since woman symbolizes nature'. Important sources of inspiration for this were the misogyny of Schopenhauer and, again, Baudelaire.[80] In an infamous passage in his *Journaux intimes* (published posthumously in 1887), Baudelaire contrasts the detestable woman with the admirable dandy: 'Woman is the Opposite of the dandy. Therefore, she inspires horror. Woman is hungry so she must eat. Thirsty, so she must drink. She is in heat so she must be fucked. How admirable! Woman is *natural*, which is to say abominable.'[81] In a brief fragment, Baudelaire connects woman to Satan by referencing Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*: 'The Camel of Cazotte, camel, Devil and woman'.[82] The woman-Devil association appears several times in *Les Fleurs du mal* as well. 'Les Métamorphoses du vampire' ('Metamorphosis of the Vampire') depicts a vampire woman who is likened to a serpent. The snake-like creature mockingly declares that '[t]he helpless angels would damn themselves for me!'[83] Similar serpent metaphors are also combined with witch imagery to describe a woman in 'Le Beau Navire' ('The Beautiful Ship').[84] In 'La Béatrice', Baudelaire has the narrator experience a vision of dwarf-like demons tormenting him, and in the final lines he catches sight of

> The queen of my heart with peerless gaze,
> Who laughed with them at my dark distress
> And occasionally bestowed upon them some filthy caress.[85]

À Rebours contains a great deal of misogyny along the same lines. In his rant against nature, des Esseintes especially highlights how man's ingenuity has surpassed nature's creation woman, who in his opinion is outshined by the steam train (*sic*!).[86] Woman, again, is held up as nature incarnate, the polar opposite of the refined male aesthete. She is also seen as intellectually inferior in general. A passage in the prologue, which is in the borderland between the narrator's reflections and those of des Esseintes, emphasizes 'the innate stupidity of woman'.[87]The only women who seem to fascinate des Esseintes (and Huysmans) in a lasting manner are the ones depicted in art as incarnations of cosmic evil, for example, Salome in Gustave Moreau's

paintings. This demonization of the female sex was validated by Moreau himself in a description of his painting *Les Chimères* ('The Chimaeras', 1884), which was often quoted by critics of his time. He holds his painting up as a depiction of 'woman, in her primal essence', that is: 'a being without thought, crazed with a desire for the unknown, for mystery, in love with evil in the form of perverse and diabolical seduction'. He further explains that the females in his painting have 'ears still filled with the serpent's beguiling instruction' and 'are beings with souls annihilated, waiting by the wayside for that lascivious goat, straddled by lust, whom they will worship'.[88] Woman as literally a creature of the Devil was indeed a notion very much alive in art, not only in the œuvre of artists like Moreau and Félicien Rops who we can situate in the immediate surroundings of Decadence. Other typical examples of its prevalence include Alfred Kubin's *Zeugung des Weibes* ('Creation of Woman', ca. 1900–1905) (figure 7.2) and Otto Greiner's *Der Teufel zeigt das Weib dem Volke* ('The Devil Presenting Woman to the World', 1898) (figure 7.3).[89]

FIGURE 7.2 Alfred Kubin, *Zeugung des Weibes*, pen and ink, ca. 1900–1905.

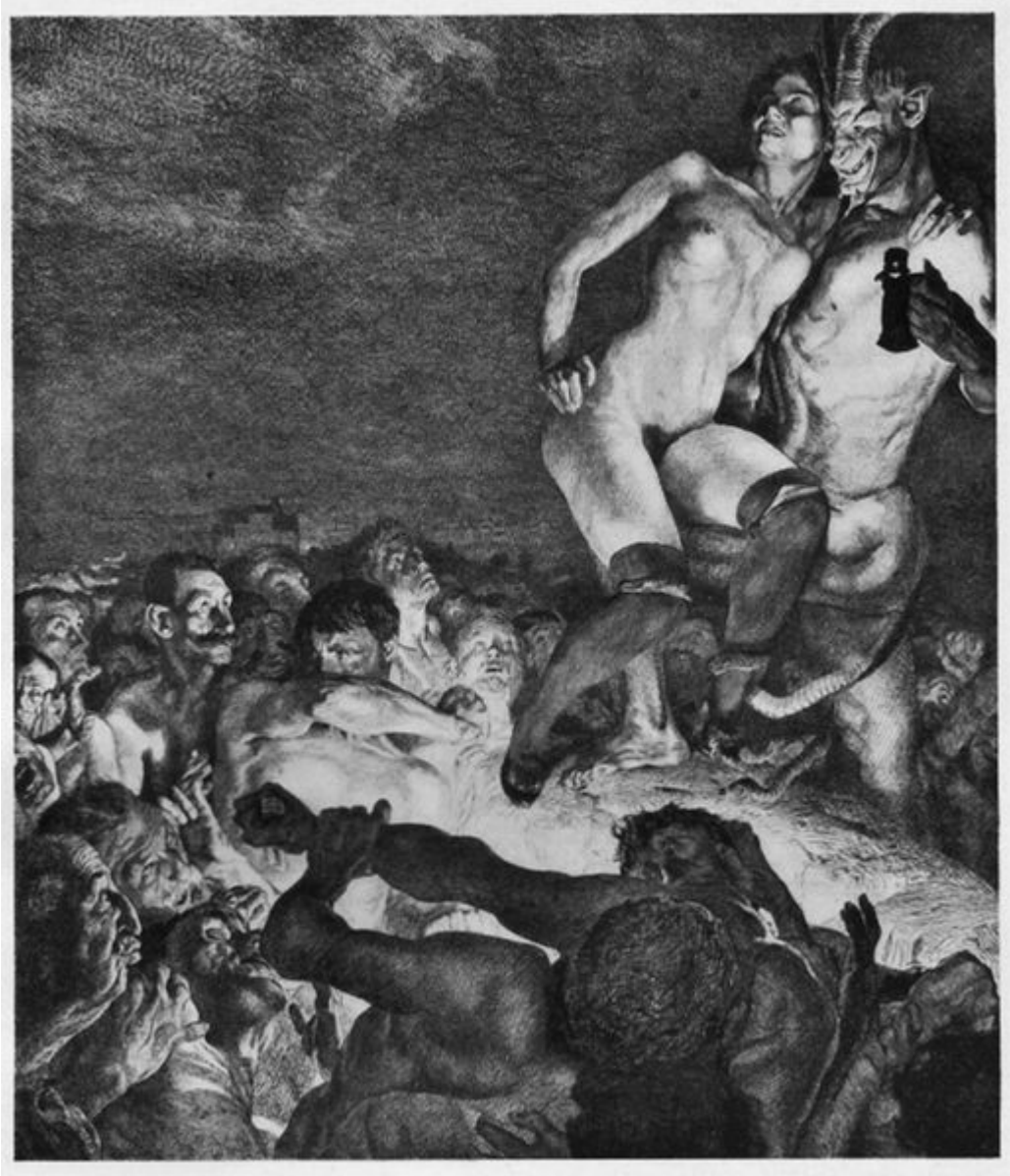

FIGURE 7.3 Otto Greiner, *Der Teufel zeigt das Weib dem Volke*, lithograph, 1898, 54 × 46 cm, The Jack Daulton Collection. Photo by Don Tuttle.

The Decadent discourse on literally demonic femininity is more complicated than the extreme misogyny that these examples might be taken to indicate. In Great Britain, conservative critics linked the so-called New Woman authors to the Decadent writers, since both were enemies of hegemonic culture and perceived as products of the corrupting influence of French literature, which threatened to dissolve proper gender roles.[90] There is some support in the documented self-image of Decadents for this claim

about the genre (and its associated subculture) subverting gender constructions. As has been briefly mentioned earlier, male Decadents tended to see themselves as feminized, and in an 1894 article in the *Yellow Book* Max Beerbohm describes the amalgamation of the sexes as 'one of the chief planks in the decadent platform'. For all his occasional (and in some cases quite sustained and pronounced) misogyny, the male Decadent certainly did appropriate various traits and metaphors traditionally coded as feminine: flower symbolism, passivity, vanity, hypersensitivity, enthusiasm for fashion and ornamentation, renunciation of the struggle for self-realization in the outside world (which was replaced with a private and domestic life, not unlike that deemed appropriate for women).[91] The quintessential Decadent anti-hero des Esseintes reflects that 'he himself was becoming feminine', while George Moore pronounces femininity one of his own most prominent features during his Decadent period.[92] Pierre Vareilles, in the article 'Le progrès' ('Progress') in *Le Décadent* (10 April 1886), had connected Decadence with approaching the womanly, stating that Decadents were getting closer to an ideal of perfection where '[m]an becomes more refined, more feminine, more divine'.[93] Even the 'first' theoretician—and attacker—of literary decadence, Désiré Nisard, had seen it as connected with femininity, writing that it was distinguished by cravings that were 'capricious and feminine, rather than virile desires'.[94]

The self-feminization of the Decadent could be seen as a male equivalent of the self-masculinization of the New Woman, who seized for herself things considered typically masculine: independence, being a public rather than domestic figure, wearing trousers, riding bicycles.[95] This pair, then, rejected their designated place and function in the gender system to an extent, which in combination with anxieties about decreasing birth rates caused considerable fear in some circles.[96] In Great Britain, the enemies of the Decadent and the New Woman connected the two figures fairly often, and saw them both as symptoms of the very much undesirable 'gender trouble' of the age. Considering them such a symptom is certainly correct to some degree, but need not, we should be aware, for that reason involve any feminist sympathies on the part of male Decadents. In fact, the incorporation of feminine traits in their personae could just as well be seen as a declaration of actual women being somewhat redundant. Even so, the unsettling and subversive implications of their embrace of androgyny remain clear.

But where do the minority of female authors in the Decadent genre fit in all this? In the 'first wave' of Decadence, Rachilde (Marguerite Vallette-Eymery, 1860–1953), though certainly not the only female contributor, was practically the only woman who was accepted as a peer in some sense by the main male authors.[97] She was a good friend of Verlaine, Jean Lorrain, Catulle Mendès, and other influential figures. Jennifer Birkett sees this as being facilitated by her willingness to 'play up to the decadent stereotypes', and she designates Rachilde a 'maker, vehicle and victim of other people's dreams, whose function is to reproduce the values of a world with no energy of its own'.[98] Simultaneously, however, Birkett argues that she displays 'an ironic self-awareness that turned her concessions to the market into contempt, proclaiming her independence by caricaturing the parts she was forced to play'. Still, Rachilde was never interested in disrupting these structures as such, seemingly content with remaining 'liberated' only as a solitary figure that was 'generously' allowed by the imperious male authors to break some of the rules as long as she stayed within certain limits. In 1928 she even wrote a pamphlet with the title *Pourquoi je ne suis pas feministe* ('Why I am Not a Feminist'), which professes a staunch social conservatism.[99] She underscores that she has 'always acted as an individual, never dreaming of founding a new society or upsetting the one that existed'.[100] Birkett is deeply sceptical of efforts by some late twentieth-century feminists to claim Rachilde as one of their own.[101] Yet, there is certainly something subversive in how Rachilde played with inversions of gender, naming her novels *La Marquise de Sade* ('The Marchioness de Sade', 1887) and *Madame Adonis* (1888), as well as having a visiting card that read 'Rachilde: Man of Letters'.[102] Further, the identification with werewolves she evinced in some publications, seeing herself as a lycanthrope because she was doing something 'forbidden' during her nocturnal writing sessions (a notion I have briefly discussed in chapter 5), points in the direction of a more radical outsider identity, which she portrayed as in some sense antagonistic to the male world.

Slightly later, we find several other interesting Decadent woman authors, not least in British and American literature.[103] We can mention, for instance, the poet Rosamund Marriott Watson (1860–1911) who wrote in the *Yellow Book* under the pen name Graham R. Tomson, and forged verses like the following (from 'Walpurgis', in *Vespertilia and Other Verses*, 1895):

A weary Maenad, flushed with wine,
Between the dull dun drift she peers,
Heavy with lewd old rites malign,
Lusting for human blood and tears.
The sea-wind holds its breath for fear,
The black trees cringe upon the height;
Still, with her wicked, wanton leer,
The red moon menaces the night.[104]

However, most relevant here is Renée Vivien (Pauline Mary Tarn, 1877–1909), a British-American woman who lived in Paris and wrote in French. Truly a Decadent par excellence, Vivien's writing combines in a fascinating manner all the hallmarks of the genre—including an impassioned Satanism—with outright attacks on patriarchy. The case of Vivien, as will be thoroughly demonstrated in chapter 8, indicates that Decadence and its take on Satanism could at times quite explicitly function as a tool for striking against male dominance, albeit, in the characteristic Decadent manner, from a strongly individualist and non-collectivist perspective. Even so, we must keep in mind that Decadence—in spite of the feminization (both positively and negatively perceived), androgyny and dissolution of gender roles that both adherents and enemies often connected to it—was a predominantly male genre, and not infrequently blatantly misogynist at that.

According to Rita Felski, 'the topos of the feminine serves a specific function in the counter-discourse of late-nineteenth-century literature, signalling a formal as well as thematic refusal of an entire cluster of values associated with bourgeois masculinity.'[105] Notwithstanding, Felski states, 'The narcissistic vision of the aesthete negates the possibility of female self-consciousness; women can only function as the other of a male subject, a stimulus to his pursuit of the ideal.'[106] As a reply to a rejoinder to her article by Joann Russ, Felski however explicates that she does, after all, think that the Decadent 'cult of artificiality', with its 'questioning of both gender and sexuality', did play 'a significant part in the construction of a variety of self-consciously oppositional identities during the period'.[107] It is this type of identities that primarily interest me, again with Renée Vivien as the most clearly shining example. The seeds of such use of Decadence are to be found in the ambivalent treatment of the broad theme we can call the demonic feminine in texts of the genre. We shall now consider some prominent

examples, concentrating on those that are somehow connected to Satan. More general appearances by femmes fatales, supernatural and otherwise, are too numerous in Decadence to even attempt a cursory sketch here.[108]

'IF YOU CANNOT BE A GOOD, FAITHFUL WIFE, THEN BE A DEVIL!': LILITH, WHIPS, AND DEMONIC DAMES

As we have seen in chapter 5, wicked and frightening women were prominent in several key Gothic texts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and they were often directly tied to Satan. Sinister female figures, at times supernatural, were a well-established topos in the non-Gothic literature of the time as well. Some famous specimens are Keats's ballad 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' ('The Merciless Beautiful Lady', 1819) and Coleridge's *Christabel* (written in 1800, published as a pamphlet in 1816). The works of the English Pre-Raphaelites were commonly regarded as strongly focused on a glamorization of demonic femininity. A good example of this perception can be found in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), where a painted portrait of the character giving the novel its name is described as follows:

> No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, *sinister light* to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and *almost wicked look* it had in the portrait.
>
> It was so like, and yet so unlike. . . . The perfection of feature, the brilliancy of coloring, were there; but I suppose the painter had copied quaint *medieval monstrosities* until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of *a beautiful fiend*.[109]

As described in chapter 2, a particular femme fatale that became somewhat popular around this time was Lilith, Adam's rebellious first wife and subsequently Satan's emancipated partner. Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti painted the widely famed *Lady Lilith* (ca. 1864–68) (figure 7.4).[110] To accompany his canvas he wrote a sonnet, 'Body's Beauty' (1870), where he portrays Lilith as a stereotypical demonic female, who slays men by strangling them with her hair.[111] In an 1870 letter, Rossetti explained that his painting 'represents a *Modern Lilith*'.[112] This, then, is not some mythical being confined to a distant past. Hence, the painting becomes open to interpretations where it would have something—presumably not anything

pleasant—to say about contemporary women. Rossetti had earlier treated Lilith in his poem 'Eden Bower' (1869), where he contrasts her evil with the goodness of Eve ('With her was hell and with Eve was heaven').[113] Polish art historian Marek Zasempa emphasizes the fact that here, unlike in 'Body's Beauty', Lilith is given the leading voice and relates the story.[114] His assertion that Rossetti 'does not moralise, nor does he judge Lilith' seems a little odd, however, given lines like that about how hellish Adam's time with her was.[115] In the letter just quoted, Rossetti also touched on 'Body's Beauty', and explained that '[t]he idea … of the perilous principle in the world being female from the first . . . is about the most essential notion of the sonnet'.[116] The authorial intention must thus be taken to be quite thoroughly misogynist.

FIGURE 7.4 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, oil on canvas, 97 × 84 cm, 1866–1868, altered 1872–1873, Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, 1935.

FIGURE 7.5 John Collier, *Lilith*, oil on canvas, 1887, 86 × 46 cm, Atkinson Art Gallery, © The Atkinson, Southport.

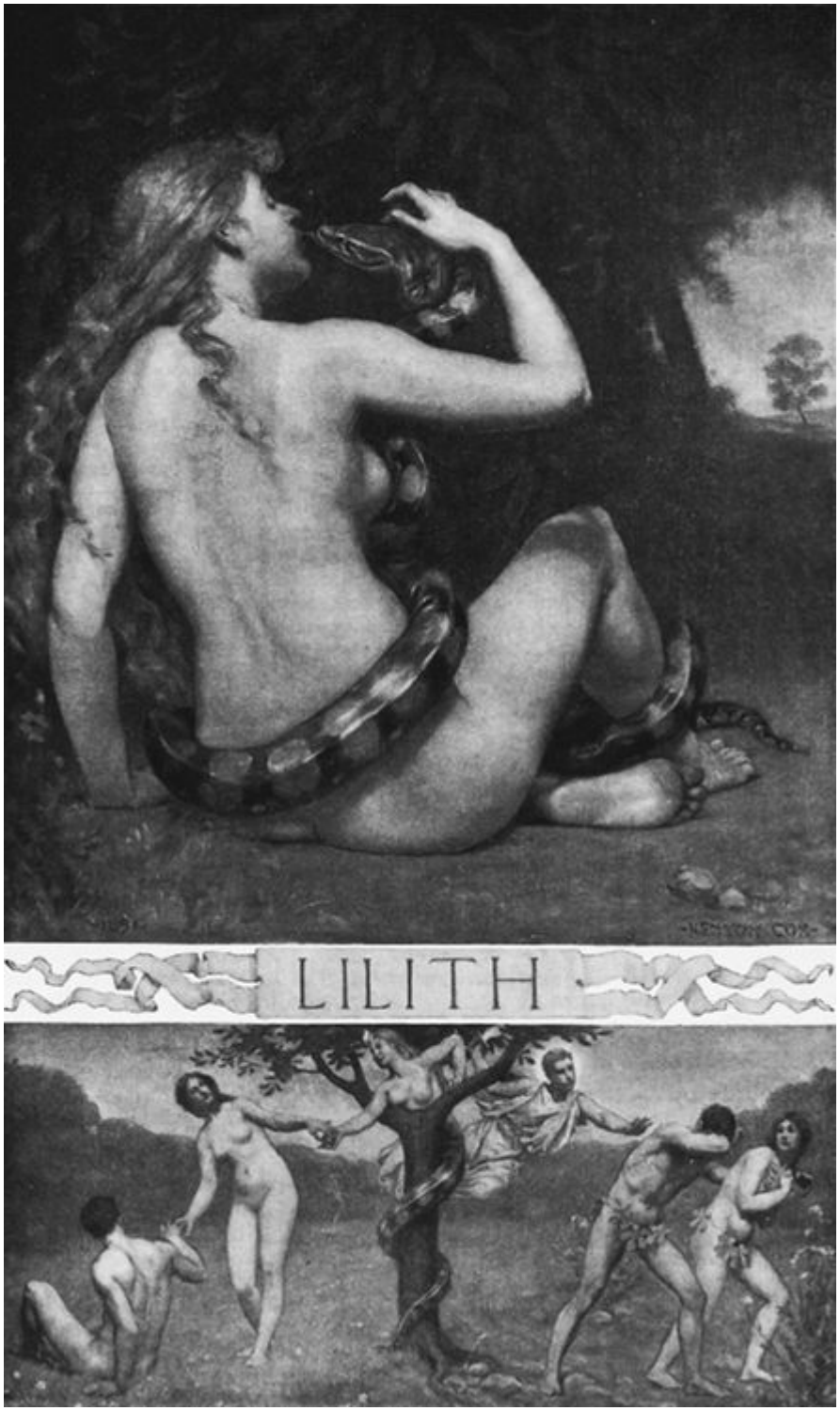

FIGURE 7.6 Kenyon Cox, *Lilith*, oil on canvas, ca. 1892, measurements unknown, unlocated, here a reproduction from *Scribner's Magazine*, No. 12, December 1892.

Several other painters also produced canvases of Lilith, among them John Collier (*Lilith*, 1887) (figure 7.5), who was a Pre-Raphaelite belonging to the movement's younger generation, and the American Kenyon Cox (*Lilith*, ca. 1892) (figure 7.6). Nineteenth-century literature is even more rife with appearances by the first woman. In Victor Hugo's unfinished epic poem *La Fin de Satan* (written 1854–62, published posthumously in 1886), Lilith is present throughout the narrative. She is portrayed as the daughter of Satan and an active supporter of evil, who brought our world the Sword, Prison, and the Cross on which Christ was crucified. She perceives especially the population of France as a threat to her evil plans, due to their love of liberty. Unlike Satan, who at the end of the poem is redeemed and transformed back to his pre-rebellion self Lucifer, Lilith is so wicked that she cannot be redeemed, and the angel of liberty vaporizes her.[117]

The sinister first woman is given even more space in French Decadent Remy de Gourmont's play *Lilith* (1892), which was probably never actually intended to be performed, but rather to be read as a prose poem. The action takes place mostly in the Garden of Eden, but also in Hell and other places. Gourmont describes the first time Satan and Lilith have intercourse in a fairly detailed manner that must have been shocking to many of his contemporaries. Afterwards, the Evil One declares: 'Such should our first kisses be, ours! We have, for all time, perverted Love! We have turned it on its head! Woman, I adore you!'[118] Lilith returns his praise, and in a long pompous, declamatory dialogue they continue to eulogize each other's blasphemous and lascivious qualities.[119] Among other things, Lilith asks Satan to call her sterility, rhetorically asking 'Am I not the Infertile one?'[120] This passage reads like a rather ironic textbook example of the Decadent tendency to aestheticize and give an eloquent voice to evil. After the infernal couple have tired of each other sexually, Satan—always trying to come up with ways to disturb God's plans—suggests that his mate seduce Adam, and he himself will seduce Adam's new companion Eve.[121] Having assumed the shape of a serpent, Satan tries to convince the couple in Eden that they should eat of the forbidden fruit. Eve is more curious than her husband, and lets her thirst for knowledge get the better of her. After eating the fruit, she says to the serpent: 'O my little Satan, thank you, I love you.'[122] Satan's monologue afterwards makes it clear that he is, however, certainly not a helper or benevolent initiator.[123]

When Adam and Eve have surrendered to temptation, God casts them out from the Garden. He is not kind and loving at heart either, and the monologue he now sprouts makes it clear that he is a power-loving and insecure figure, who admits that Adam and Eve's fruit eating made him afraid. Why? Because 'had they with the aid of Knowledge conquered Life, what would I be? A God among gods, maybe not the supreme'. Things did not turn out that way, though, and God is content.[124] He goes on to list a number of cruel ways in which he will punish man's disobedience, that are so vicious that even his own angels feel they are unwarranted.[125] In de Gourmont's universe, no good divine power appears to exist. Both Satan and God are evil sadists who torment man. Soon enough, Adam starts hating God.[126] In this portrayal, Satan and Lilith are both decidedly evil, and Lilith is in no way a feminist figure—she is merely lustful and wicked. By letting her declaim long poetic celebrations of evil, however, de Gourmont participates in the tradition of giving voice to alternative femininities—giving a platform to the antithesis of the Angel in the House, as it were. We encounter a similarly wicked Lilith in many other texts of the period. One example is Jean Lorrain's poem 'Lilithe', published in *L'Ombre ardente* ('The Burning Shadow', 1897), where she defiantly cries out 'God, I bless my crime and my infertility' and declares that she prefers Satan's impiety to God's supposed goodness.[127] It is notable that a refusal of motherhood (or an inability to have children) is repeatedly held up as the ultimate sign of Lilith's evil.

In Decadent literature, the wicked women's connection to Satan could both be explicit—as in the case of the depictions of Lilith—or present primarily on the level of language and metaphor. An example of the latter is Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's (1836–1895) *Venus im Pelz* ('Venus in Furs', 1870), which could perhaps best be designated a proto-Decadent work. The protagonist, Severin, enters into a masochist relation with a certain Wanda, who proceeds to torment him in various ways, just as he has asked for. The adjectives connecting her to the Satanic come with almost as short intervals as the lashes of the whip in the novel. Her hair is repeatedly described as 'demonic'.[128] Severin declares her his '[d]evilishly fair mythical woman'.[129] He admonishes her: '[I]f you cannot be a good, faithful wife, then be a devil!'[130] He tells her that she must have a 'demonic magnitude' in their relation and describes her as '[m]y beautiful Devil'.[131] He dreams of 'her devilish laughter' and ponders if she, trampling other humans underfoot, is

one ‘of those neurotic natures, who find a devilish pleasure therein’ (figure 7.7).[132] Wanda herself states that she has been ‘overcome by a devilish curiosity’, ponders whether a certain behaviour will cause her ‘a diabolical joy’, and repeats phrases from a letter by Severin ‘with satanic glee’.[133] Her African servants are described as ‘black devils’ (and are, we can note, quite similar to those in service to Carathis in *Vathek*). Wanda becomes jealous when Severin looks admiringly at one of them, causing her to exclaim, ‘In the end, you like her better than me, she is even more demonic.’[134] Her visage as portrayed in a drawing is pronounced a ‘diabolical face’, and the artist lays down that ‘she is a she-devil’.[135] Seen in isolation, these examples could seem a mere use of metaphors without any deeper significance, but taken together they heavily demonize Wanda and connect her with Satan.

This is further emphasized by Sacher-Masoch’s constant references to Goethe’s *Faust*. Severin’s rooms are likened to Faust’s chambers, and the narrator says that ‘[f]rom behind the great green stove, Mephistopheles as a travelling scholastic could appear at any moment’.[136] The protagonist also reads to Wanda from *Faust*, and the motto he chooses for the manuscript where he documents the events of the novel are two lines from Goethe’s epic of soul-selling.[137] Having become the servant or slave of Wanda, he also thinks of the tale of Faust: ‘I have the feeling of being sold or having signed away my soul to the Devil.’[138] This literary reference once more demonizes Wanda and projects onto her the image of Satan. In fact, the whole narrative is driven by such projections. Severin has always seen in a beautiful female ‘all poetry as well as everything demonic concentrated in woman’. He claims to have been engaged in a veritable cult of woman, since she, being nature personified, is divine. Sensuality, he states, is the only holy thing for him.[139] Wanda is to some extent Severin’s creation, and at first her own degree of agency seems doubtful. As his dominatrix, she gets the upper hand in the relationship, but only because he desires this. Ultimately, she leaves Severin to be dominated herself by a man, which hardly speaks for her having become an empowered individual. At the end of the novel, however, the narrator proclaims in a surprisingly progressive way that the consistently problematic relation between the sexes is caused by power imbalances. Severin states that the moral of his experience with Wanda is the following: ‘That woman, as nature has created her, and man is currently raising her, is his enemy and can only be his slave or his oppressor, but never his

companion. This she may become only after she has equal rights, when she is his equal through education and work.'[140] Though his attempt is a failed one (and it frankly seems unclear if he really wants to empower her, or if he is more interested in putting her in power temporarily as a titillating topsy-turvy role-playing game), it is remarkable how the protagonist conveys the increase of her authority and strength through diabolical metaphors. In fact, this projection of devilish traits on her can be said to be an integral part of his endeavour. Coupled with the arguments in support of gender equality at the end, this makes the novel a contribution to the discourse of Satanic feminism.

FIGURE 7.7 Illustration by Fritz Buchholz for a 1921 edition of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* (1870).

In a similarly metaphorical vein, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly—another important precursor of Decadence—asks in the preface to his cynical and ironic collection of tales about wicked women, *Les Diaboliques* ('The Possessed', 1874): '[W]hy should they not be the *Possessed*? Do they not have enough diabolism in their persons to deserve this pretty name?' He states that these are 'true stories of this era of progress and of a civilisation which is so delightful, and so *divine*, that when one tries to write about it, it always appears the Devil has dictated'.[141] His idea about nefarious females being an emblem of his time holds some truth at least in regards to art, as it has been claimed that the final decades of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic increase in depictions of femmes fatales. This emphasis on female figures of evil may seem extremely eccentric, but actually corresponds with concerns that were at the time often expressed not only by men of letters and artists. For example, the Italian physician and criminologist Cesare Lombroso, a dominant voice in many discourses of the time, assures us about women that 'their evil tendencies are more numerous and more varied than men's, but generally remain latent. When they are awakened and excited they produce results proportionately greater'.[142]

'THE SHRINE WHERE A SIN IS A PRAYER': SACRALIZING THE ETERNAL DEMONIC FEMININE

At the turn of the century, femmes fatales were often given a truly cosmic scope, frequently by the use of blatantly demonic imagery. These women were no petty criminals or village evildoers, but goddesses of evil. The Decadents seemingly attempted to distil an image of a negative eternal feminine, a sort of sinister transcultural shadow image of the holy and good *Ewig weibliche* familiar from Goethe's *Faust*. As a representative example, where the connection to Satan is clearly foregrounded, the opening lines of Theodore Wratislaw's poem 'L'Éternel féminin', from his *Caprices* (1893), can be quoted:

> Lilith or Eve, I was before the flood,
> And Eden grew the palace of my sin
> Wherewith I stirred the lust that slumbered in
> The then unquickened furnace of man's blood;
> Kissing my mouth he saw that ill was good,

Lust was Love's brother, Vice to Virtue kin.[143]

Interestingly, 'Sonnet Macabre' in the same collection sees Wratislaw enthusiastically declaring his love of precisely this type of femininity:

I love you for the grief that lurks within
Your languid spirit, and because you wear
Corruption with a vague and childish air,
And with your beauty know the depths of sin;

Because shame cuts and holds you like a gin,
And virtue dies in you slain by despair,
Since evil has you tangled in its snare
And triumphs on the soul good cannot win.

I love you since you know remorse and tears,
And in your troubled loveliness appears
The spot of ancient crimes that writhe and hiss:

I love you for your hands that calm and bless,
The perfume of your sad and slow caress,
The avid poison of your subtle kiss.[144]

This is one of several instances of Decadents explicitly hymning and celebrating the demonic feminine or the femme fatale as laudable, desirable, or positive in some sense. Algernon Swinburne (1837–1909), whom we should perhaps label a proto-Decadent, did so in several well-known poems. The most famous of them all is probably the sado-masochistic 'Dolores' (in *Poems and Ballads*, 1866). Like many of Swinburne's poems, it borrows heavily from religious symbolism and liturgical forms, but sings the praise of wicked womanhood instead of God, Christ, Mary, and goodness. In this embrace of the baleful and sinister, Swinburne also contrasts Christianity with the more allowing gods of paganism:

What ailed us, O gods, to desert you
For creeds that refuse and restrain?
Come down and redeem us from virtue,
Our Lady of Pain.[145]

Through his mistress Dolores, the poetic speaker has 'passed from the outermost portal / To the shrine where a sin is a prayer'.[146] He thus asks, 'Ah, forgive us our virtues, forgive us, / Our Lady of Pain'.[147] This is an example of how Swinburne inverts Christianity, in this case the Lord's Prayer ('forgive us our sins'). The poetic speaker says to his 'Lady of Pain', Dolores:

> Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgins;
> But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,
> Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,
> And then they would haunt thee in heaven.[148]

Throughout, Dolores is consistently conflated both with the Virgin Mary and with the demonic (the latter is seen, for example, in lines like 'The foam of a serpentine tongue, / The froth of the serpents of pleasure' and the assurance 'We shall see whether hell be not heaven').[149]

The pictorial art of the period holds many other examples of this approach. We can think, for instance, of Jean Delville's *L'Idole de la perversité* ('The Idol of Perversity', 1891), which clearly draws on formal Madonna-imagery —halo, one-point perspective from below, and so on—in its depiction of a demonic female figure. Delville was certainly not a painter who celebrated evil and darkness, but nonetheless his works often emphasize its allure and beauty in a sacralizing way that gives an image like *L'Idole* an unholy numinous atmosphere. Even more relevant is Franz von Stuck's many versions of *Die Sünde* ('Sin', 1891), depicting a lascivious serpent-entwined woman obscured in deep shadows (figure 7.8). The columns flanking the frame of the most famous version of the painting 'underscore the cultic character of the image', as Gudrun Körner points out. A version of it forms the centrepiece, blasphemously occupying the position of a Christian altar panel, of what has been called an 'artist's altar' in von Stucks's grand villa in Munich.[150] Norwegian artist Edvard Munch's *Kvinne med rødt hår og grønne øyne: Synden* ('Woman with Red Hair and Green Eyes: Sin', 1902) is in the same spirit as von Stuck's *Die Sünde*, similarly letting sin become incarnate. Anthropomorphizing this concept could be said to turn it into a sort of deity.[151]

FIGURE 7.8 Franz von Stuck, *Die Sünde*, oil on canvas, 1893, 95 × 60 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Wikimedia Commons.

Some writers projected this artistic tendency to create goddesses of evil or blasphemous female figures backwards in time. The most famous example is British aesthete Walter Pater's celebrated 1869 essay on Leonardo's *La Gioconda*.[152] According to Pater, Leonardo has done with the *Mona Lisa* what he often did with nominally Christian motifs, using them 'as a cryptic language for fancies all of his own'. Pater goes on to say that she embodies 'the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle ages … the *return of the Pagan*

world, the sins of the Borgias'.[153] *La Gioconda*, in short, personifies the eternal feminine—a sinister, pagan variety of it. Just how ancient, ominous, and Gothic a figure she is becomes clear when Pater, in what is perhaps the single most famous sentence ever about the painting in question, states: 'She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave.'[154]

Decadent writing seldom follows through with its semantic inversion, and this applies to demonic women as well. In the mainstream discourses of the time, ideal women tend to be portrayed as good, timid, and weak. The only strength a woman was typically allowed was that of a martyr negating her own self for the sake of others. Decadence instead presents a sort of feminine ideal where woman is evil, bold, and powerful. Yet, those who wholeheartedly glorified and commended this femme fatale were not a majority in the genre, and many—even among more libertine and epicurean Decadents—instead expressed disgust, horror, and moral indignation. But some, like Wratislaw, clearly held her up as laudable. What are we to make of such eulogies? As Bram Dijkstra notes, it is 'tempting to see in the doings of the decadents an oblique tribute to the powers of the feminine', yet we must constantly keep in mind the fact that 'their tribute was cast in the form of an act of negation and had been shaped by revulsion'.[155] Even so, according to Asti Hustvedt, there is a general tendency in the typical Decadent text that '[b]eneath the surface of virulent misogyny' there lies 'a genuine admiration for the very monsters it creates'. She continues to explain that in Decadence

> [w]oman is despised because she is closer to nature than man, but also celebrated because she is inherently perverse. The decadents divorce the female from the feminine and create two distinct ideas. The female, the actual female body, is abhorrent because it is natural. The feminine, however, may be admired because it is duplicitous, mysterious, and finds its ultimate realization in artifice.[156]

In other words, that which is idealized is usually a fantasy image, a projection—perhaps of sexually arousing masochistic fantasies in the spirit of Sacher-Masoch. As I will discuss in chapters 8 and 9, this fantasy image—in some sense a figure of power and independence—could be adopted as an identity by real women for various reasons. But the image was seldom 'feminist' in any developed sense when constructed by male Decadents, although the imagery expressed hostility towards the patriarchal order. The femme fatale aside, the Decadent cult of artificiality and androgyny could be

seen as holding potential for a deconstruction where the fabricated nature of gender is demonstrated. To some extent, we can view Rachilde's gender bending and Renée Vivien's Satanist reversal of the symbolic primacy of the genders (despite the fact that the latter, as we will see, in this endeavour retains the traditional characteristics of both men and women) as picking up on precisely these destabilizing prospects inherent in the genre.

'THE TRUE FATHER OF THE INFERNAL CHURCH': THE ART OF FéLICIEN ROPS

Having delineated the Decadent genre and detailed the general role of Satanism and demonic women in such texts, we will now undertake the chapter's first extended case study. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the visual representation of Satanism was a market niche cornered almost exclusively by a certain Félicien Rops (1833–1898). He grew up in the provincial town of Namur, not far from Brussels, and lost his father at age twelve. The boy's devoutly Catholic mother was thus left in sole charge of his education. Even many years later, he was therefore able to recite the gospels in Latin from memory. As a teenager, Rops read both the Romantic literature that was fashionable at the time and more unexpected and obscure works like the *Malleus Maleficarum*.[157] In Rops's œuvre, we can hence observe a coupling of his intimate knowledge of the Bible and the witch lore of the *Malleus* with the spirit of rebellion and love of shock effects typical of Romanticism. There was never, we should note, a formalized movement of any kind in pictorial art using the self-designation 'Decadent', but it is clear that Rops's imagery is rich in the kind of motifs popular with literary Decadents (if not, perhaps, fully similar in attitude to them). Mario Praz accordingly assures us that he 'is the artist most representative of the Decadent Movement'.[158] Indeed, Rops developed a friendship with the most influential precursor of Decadence, Charles Baudelaire, and engraved the frontispiece to a small volume of his banned poems. Rops's own work came to be strongly influenced by the poet's favourite subjects and typical metaphors.[159] The appreciation was mutual, and Baudelaire composed a sonnet praising the artist.[160] Other men of letters that Rops knew in private included Théophile Gautier and Prosper Mérimée. Further on, authors like Octave Mirbeau, Octave Uzanne, Emile Verhaeren, Joséphin Péladan, and Huysmans wrote laudatory essays on his work.[161] The obscure poet Pierre

Caume even produced an entire collection of poems about his work, *Les Ropsiaques* (1898).[162]

Rops's star reached its zenith in the mid-1880s. At this point, the middle-aged artist became the darling of the literary avant-garde (with his engravings gracing books by Mallarmé, Verlaine, and similar figures) and also achieved a limited amount of fame with a wider audience. Most of his work was in the field of illustration, rather than produced for the salons of high art, and he was now among the best-paid illustrators in the francophone world. In 1888, Rops was even awarded the cross of the Légion d'Honneur, though this was, typically enough, followed three days later by the authorities confiscating three books he had illustrated, as the pictures within were perceived as a threat to public morals. Earlier, Rops had been seen as something of a marginal eccentric. With the broad reaction against the materialism underpinning realist and impressionist painting, however, artists like Rops and Moreau emerged as appealing alternatives to the dominant anti-idealist focus on everyday matters and things.[163] Nevertheless, Rops did not move exclusively in a timeless idealist and mythological sphere, but was highly preoccupied with depicting his own day and age. His way of doing so, though, was to mix almost naturalist renderings of, for example, prostitutes with allegorical and mythical motifs. It was the latter dimension that his admirers attached the most importance to. Huysmans, for example, asserted in *Certains* (1889) that Rops has 'celebrated, not contemporary woman, not the Parisian woman, with her mannered charms … but the essential woman outside of time, the venereal and naked beast, the mercenary of Darkness, the absolute servant of the Devil'.[164] Let us now consider in detail some of the images that Rops produced which would have given rise to such an appraisal.

APPLES AND PHALLUSES: SOME EXAMPLES OF THE DEMONIC FEMININE IN ROPS'S OEUVRE

While the Satanic motifs are most prominent in the later phase of Rops's career, as early as around 1860 he produced *Les Diables froids* ('The Cold Devils'), a depiction of a voluptuous woman being embraced by her demon lover, a black-skinned devil with bat wings (figure 7.9). The lusty female seems to be wearing the bonnet and flower-embroidered skirt of a peasant woman. In contrast with the agrarian and rustic woman in this image, and

also at variance with the Satanic serf witch in Michelet's *La Sorcière*, Rops's mature works present the opposite conception. The urbane modern woman is there portrayed as being in league with the Devil, while the woman of the countryside is an innocent far removed from the demonic realm, who appears in the most serene and happy pictures the artist produced.[165]

Rops treated many time-honoured motifs of female evil, for example, in his frontispiece to the esotericist and ambivalently anti-Decadent author Joséphin Péladan's book *A cœur perdu* ('With a Lost Heart', 1888) (figure 7.10). In this picture, Eve—apple in hand and entwined by the serpent—cries out in horror (or possibly ecstasy). In the crown of the tree behind her, a banderol bears the words 'Eritis similes Deo' ('You shall become like God'). Judging by his letters to Péladan, it seems Rops knew little of the contents of the book when he produced this image, so it should be taken primarily as a reflection of his own symbolic universe. He had drawn similar pictures as early as 1880, and seventeen years after it had been printed in Péladan's book he was still producing new variants of it. The first version he submitted to Péladan was, however, withdrawn at the artist's request, since the head of the serpent pointed towards Eve's genitals in a way that would probably have clashed with the censorship laws of the time.[166] Here, Rops endorses the old idea of Eve as sexually involved with Satan. Risqué (slightly less so in the case of the published version) images like this helped keep such notions alive. While the most plausible interpretation of Eve in this picture is that she is horrified at what she has done, Rops portrayed the Fall in more ambiguous terms in an engraving known variously as *La Pomme* ('The Apple') or *Tentation* ('Temptation'), which also exists in several versions (the most well-known is from 1896). Here, Satan has the torso of a comely youth but the lower body of a serpent. Grasping an apple, he whispers into the ear of Eve, who listens with a smile on her lips. Their relation appears mildly erotic and quite joyful, although a pious beholder would likely see this as an effect of the cunning of Satan, who in fact deceives Eve into an act she will regret for the remainder of her days. Yet, there is something rather too blissful in the look on Eve's face, which makes such a straightforwardly orthodox reading problematic.

FIGURE 7.9 Félicien Rops, *Les Diables froids*, héliogravure, n.d., ca. 1860, 20 × 16 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur, inv. G E986 © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

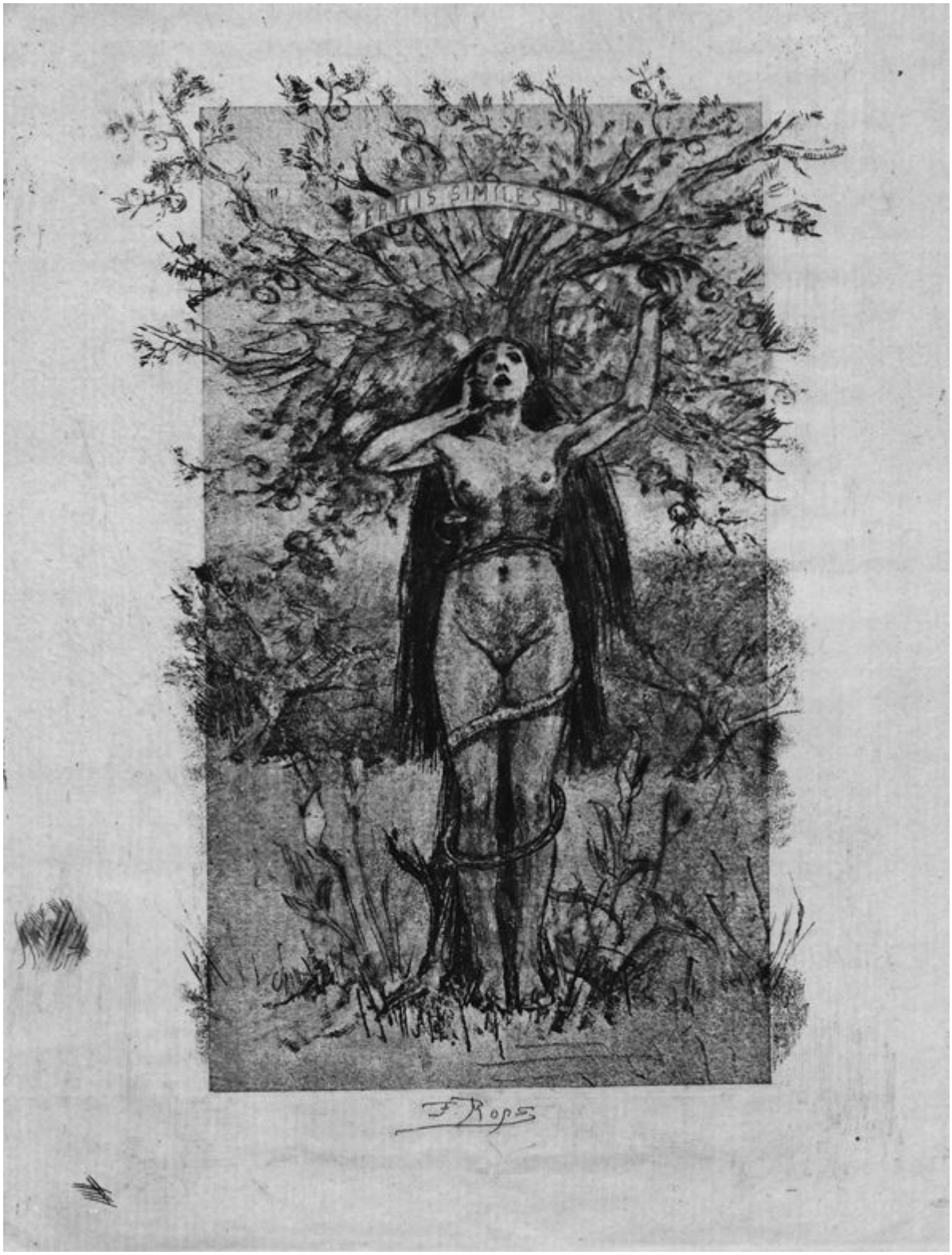

FIGURE 7.10 Félicien Rops, the first version of the frontispiece to Péladan's 1888 *À Cœur perdu*, héliogravure, 19 × 15 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur, inv. PER E520.3.P © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

FIGURE 7.11 Félicien Rops, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, coloured héliogravure, 1887, 19 × 14 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur, inv. PER E839.1.P © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

Another depiction of sinister allurement, *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* ('The Temptation of Saint Anthony', 1878), shows the saint—a glum-looking emaciated figure in tattered robes—being tormented by a curvaceous woman who has taken Christ's place on the cross (figure 7.11). The sign at the top of the cross bearing the inscription I.N.R.I. has been replaced with one that reads EROS. Behind the woman, Satan peeks out, wearing something reminiscent both of a cardinal's red cassock and the clothing of a jester. A pig, presumably a reference to Circe's transformation of Odysseus' men, stands staring at the backside of the woman. Two putti with skeletal torsos and skull faces float in the air, strewing flowers. The image clearly reflects the Christian demonization of the flesh and sensuality, and misogynist notions of woman as the embodiment of these things.

Rops's famous series of five plates, *Les Sataniques* ('The Satanic', 1882,), is his most sustained treatment of the Devil's relationship to women (figures 7.12–7.16).[167] In the first plate, *Satan semant l'ivraie* ('Satan Sowing the Tares'), the Evil One—looking like a grotesque and uncouth farmer in a broad-rimmed hat and clogs—is treading across the rooftops of a modern city whilst dropping naked women down into it from the pocket of his apron. The implication, of course, is that women are a Satanic curse upon mankind or, at the very least, that Satan accomplishes his work with the help of the worst specimens of womankind. Number two, *L'Enlèvement* ('Abduction'), is an uncommonly salacious depiction of a witch's flight through the air, where she rides on the back of the Devil (whose penis is a long obscenely pink serpent) rather than on her broom. Satan instead inserts the broom into her vagina, in a probable reference to the ideas in *Malleus Maleficarum* about woman's insatiable sexual lust leading her to Devil-worship. As seen in, for example, *Les Diables froids* and the original *A cœur perdu* frontispiece, this sexual relation was consistently the aspect of Satanism that most interested the artist. In *L'Idole* ('The Idol'), Rops has the Satanic woman mount the penis of a laurel-crowned statue of Satan (a ritualistic coupling with an effigy that may be inspired by Michelet's description of the sabbath in *La Sorcière*), flanked by two penis shaped columns with breasts and goat's hooves at their base and fire burning at their top. The scene is permeated with a sense of gloomy and mysterious splendour, owing to the temple-like setting and the apparent twilight (or dawn) indicated by the colour of the sky (in the coloured versions of the image, that is—it also exists in monochrome varieties). As is often the case,

Rops inserts a detail—here, the modern high-heeled shoes worn by the woman—to show the scene is not an archaic one, but depicts the female of his own time. *Le Sacrifice* ('The Sacrifice') sees a woman with wild eyes being penetrated by the serpent penis of a Satan wearing an animal skull as a sort of breastplate and accompanied by putti with skull faces. On a relief on the base of the marble slab that the woman is spread across, a skeleton woman masturbates with a bone—demonstrating the Decadent intertwining of Eros and Thanatos. Finally, *Le Calvaire* ('The Calvary') has a leering Satan crucified, his penis erect and the feet of his goat-like lower body strangling a woman with her own hair. The scene takes place in a crimson room filled with a multitude of candles, and the woman's arms are outstretched in a Christ-like pose. Like *L'Idole* and *Le Sacrifice* this image is heavily ritualistic and shows the Satanic ceremony taking place in an environment that seems more elaborate and "civilized" than the rural surroundings of traditional witches. The former two images have the appearance of a classical setting, once more showing the blending of Greco-Roman mythology and Satanism that was common in the period.

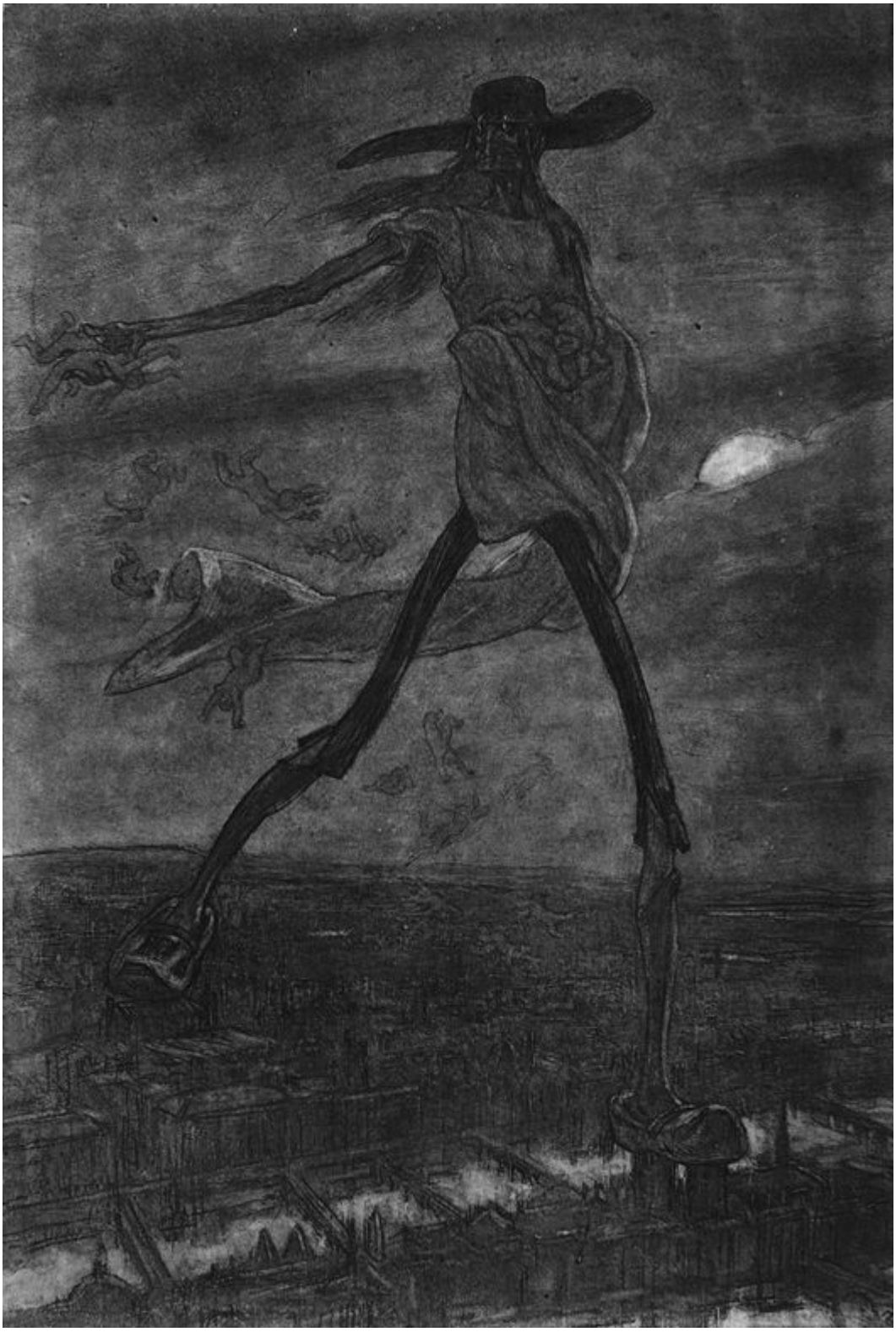

FIGURE 7.12 *I: Satan semant l'ivraie*, from Rops's *Les Sataniques*, a series of five engravings, retouched héliogravure, 1882, ca. 28 × 21 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur & Coll.

Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, en dépôt au musée Félicien Rops, inv. PER E784.2.P, © Atelier de l’imagier / Musée Rops.

FIGURE 7.13 *II: L'enlèvement*, from Rops's *Les Sataniques*, a series of five engravings, retouched héliogravure, 1882, ca. 28 × 21 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur & Coll. Fédération

Wallonie-Bruxelles, en dépôt au musée Félicien Rops, inv. PER E785.1.CF, © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

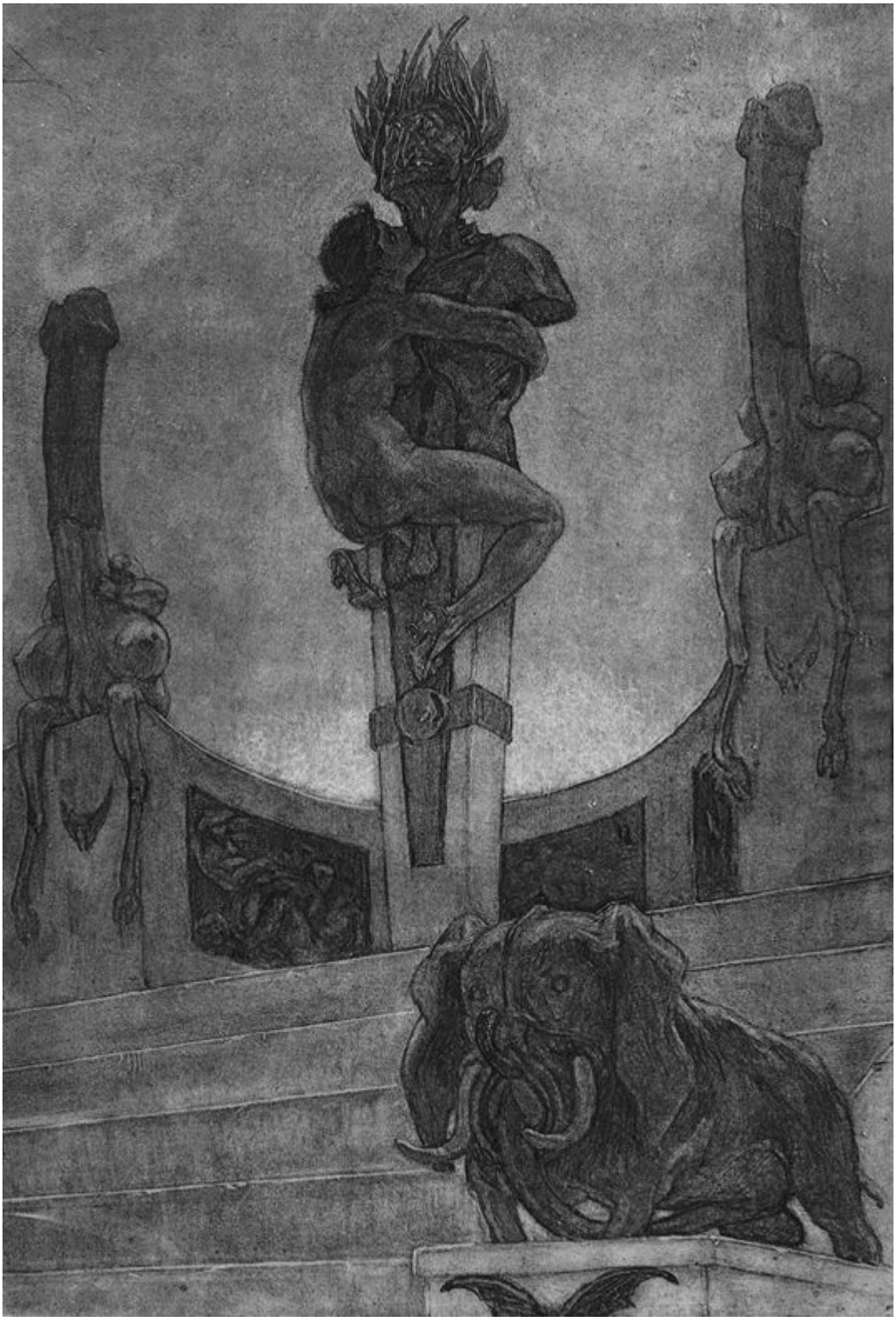

FIGURE 7.14 *III: L'Idole*, from Rops's *Les Sataniques*, a series of five engravings, retouched héliogravure, 1882, ca. 28 × 21 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur & Coll. Fédération

Wallonie-Bruxelles, en dépôt au musée Félicien Rops, inv. PER E786.1.CF, © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

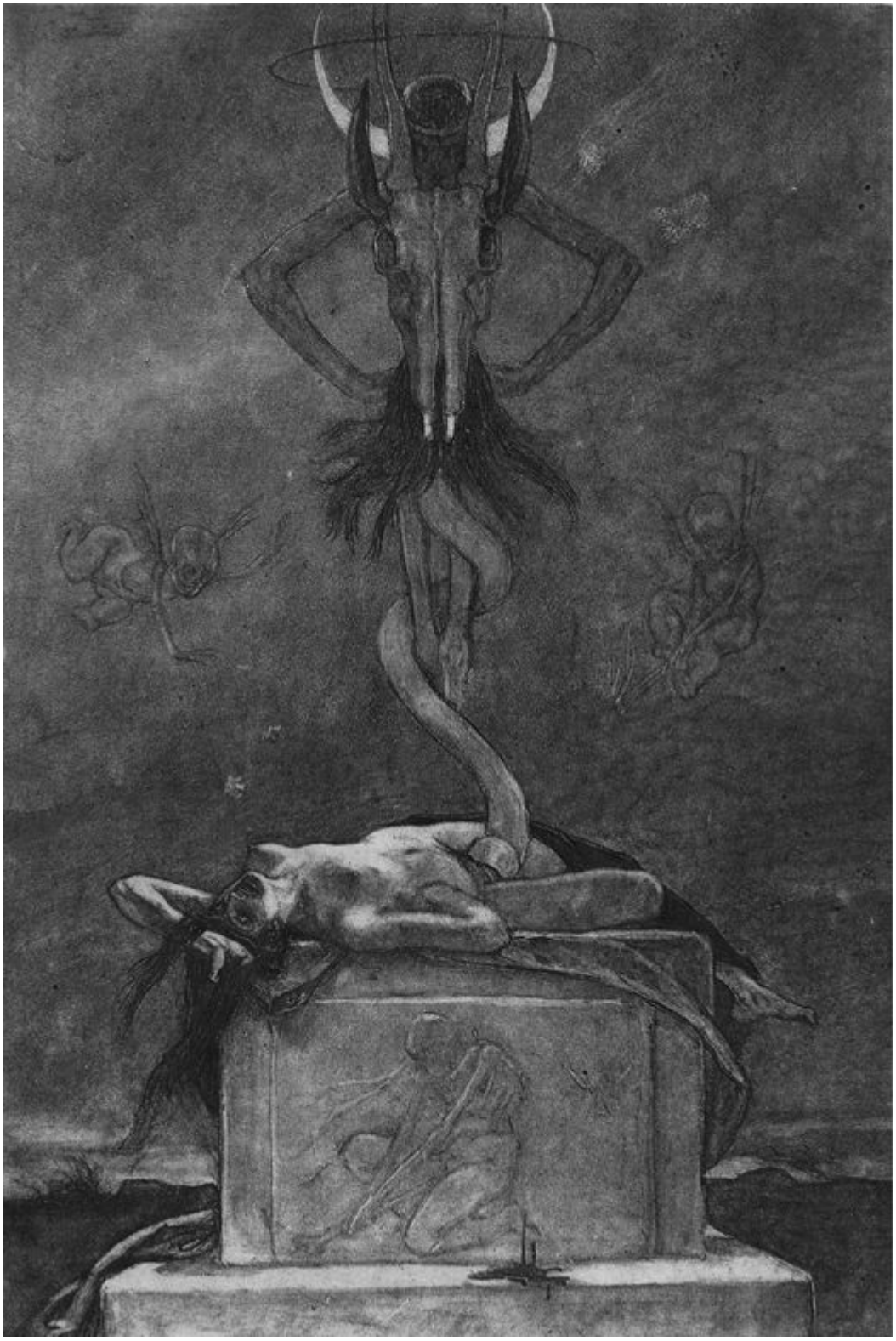

FIGURE 7.15 *IV: Le Sacrifice*, from Rops's *Les Sataniques*, a series of five engravings, retouched héliogravure, 1882, ca. 28 × 21 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur & Coll. Fédération

Wallonie-Bruxelles, en dépôt au musée Félicien Rops, inv. PER E787.1.CF, © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

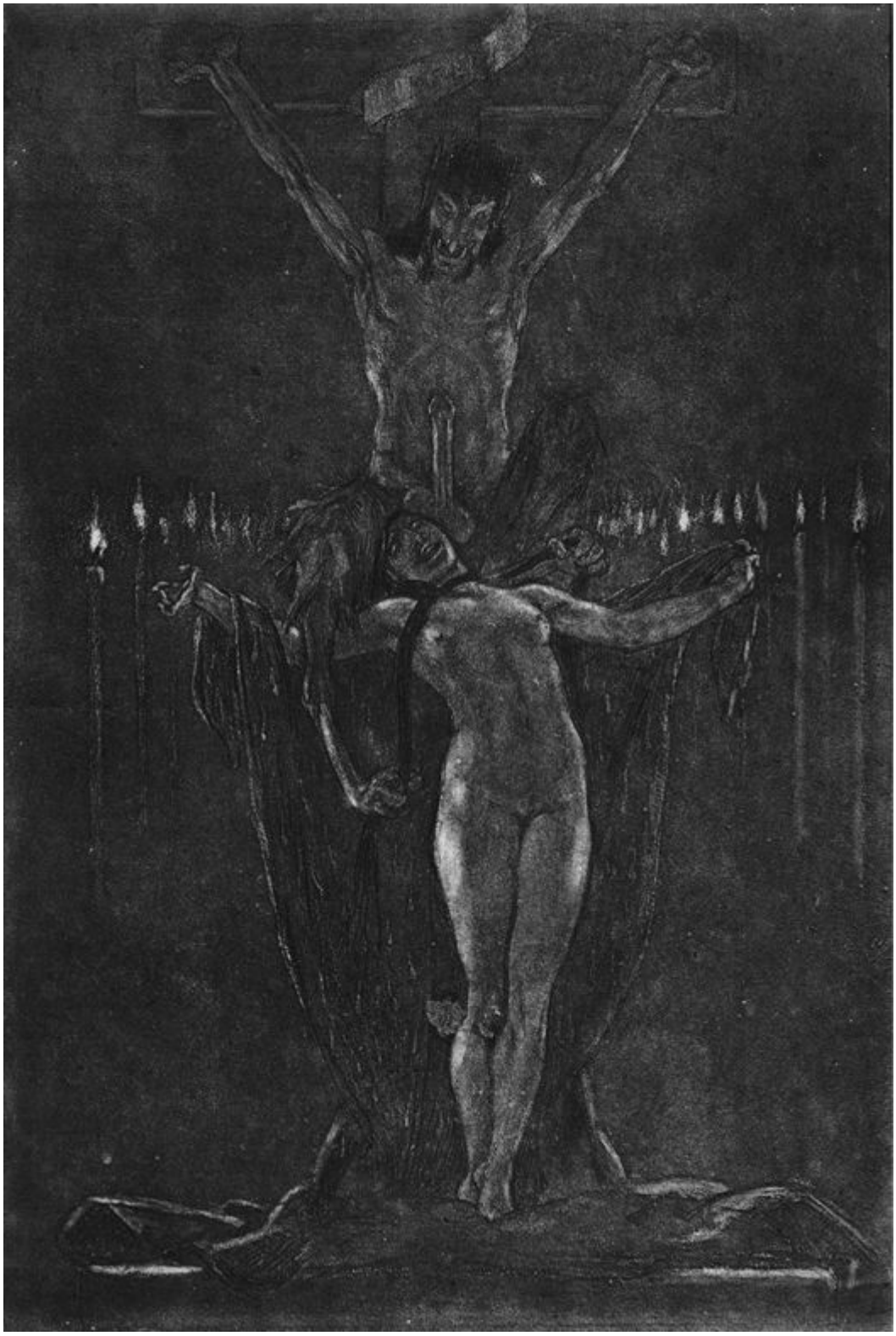

FIGURE 7.16 *V: Le Calvaire*, from Rops's *Les Sataniques*, a series of five engravings, retouched héliogravure, 1882, ca. 28 × 21 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur & Coll. Fédération

Wallonie-Bruxelles, en dépôt au musée Félicien Rops, inv. PER E783.1.CF, © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

Satanic women appear in a multitude of other works by Rops as well. In *Le Bibliothécaire* ('The Librarian', ca. 1878–81), Satan assumes the role of a sort of infernal librarian, bringing books (presumably decadent and corrupting) to a reading, half-naked girl (figure 7.17). This painting is probably inspired by Rops's countryman Antoine Wiertz's (1806–1865) *La Liseuse de romans* ('The Reader of Novels', 1853). Since 1868, Wiertz's paintings had been displayed in a state-run museum in Brussels dedicated solely to his art, and so had probably been viewed by most artists who moved in the area in the late nineteenth century and held an interest in these types of motifs.

L'Incantation ('The Incantation', ca. 1878) is an illustration to the short story 'Le Miroir de sorcellerie' ('The Mirror of Witchcraft') by Octave Uzanne (figure 7.18). It shows a naked woman—wearing only an extravagant headpiece and a cloak suggesting the red bat wings of a demon—bursting forth from a mirror in the chamber of a warlock. In Uzanne's story, the sorcerer has tried to summon Beelzebub, since he hopes the demon will help restore the vigour of his youth. His wish is fulfilled by the demon in the shape of a woman, but the tale ends with the protagonist being burned at the stake.[168] The tapestry behind this she-Devil echoes the figure in the foreground, since it depicts Eve offering Adam the apple whilst cheered on by the serpent—which has a woman's torso with bulging breasts. Rops here references the many famous older depictions of this motif, discussed in chapter 2. This shows that awareness of it was widespread in the nineteenth century.[169]

In *Naturalia* (ca. 1875) a woman lifts a devil mask aloft, and tears away the garments from her lower body, showing it to be that of a skeleton with another devil mask (or horned helmet) covering the crotch (figure 7.19). To the right of the woman, the words 'Ad majorem diaboli gloriam' ('For the greater glory of the Devil') are written. This, of course, is a parody of Ignatius of Loyola's motto for the Jesuit order, 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam' ('For the greater glory of God').

A striking fact when making an inventory of Rops's works is that male Satanists never appear. The cult of the Devil, and interaction with him in general, is seemingly the exclusive domain of woman. The images, as we

have seen, strongly emphasize the sexual nature of this relation. They hence confirmed and further popularized the idea of Satanism as a feminine thing and a form of sexual worship. With the exception of *La Pomme*, consorting with Satan is not represented as enjoyable and pleasant in any conventional sense. The many portrayals of women writhing in ecstasy when being penetrated by the Devil, however, attest that he is doubtless a bringer of erotic rapture, although some simultaneous pain generally seems to be involved.

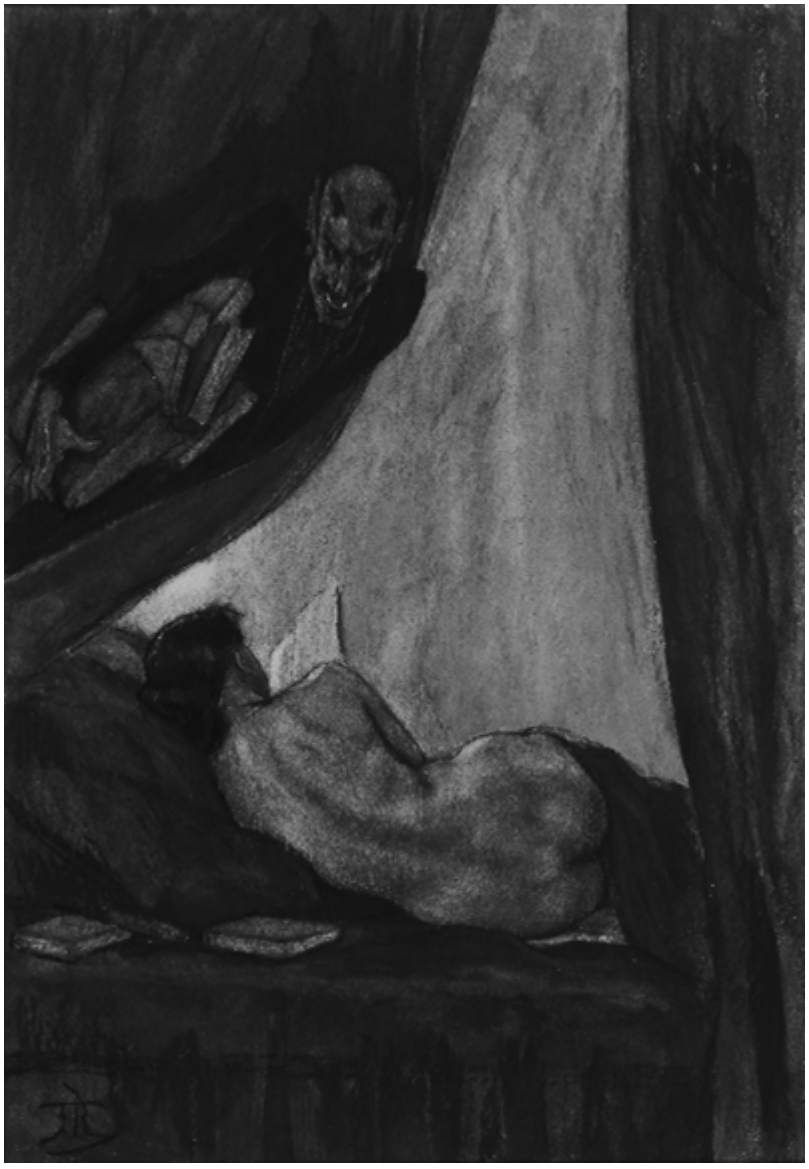

FIGURE 7.17 Félicien Rops, *Le Bibliothécaire*, lead mine, coloured pencil and watercolour, ca. 1878–1881, 22 × 15 cm, private collection © Luc Schrobiltgen.

FIGURE 7.18 Félicien Rops, *L'Incantation*, illustration to Octave Uzanne's 'Le Miroir de sorcellerie' (1875–78), watercolour, gouache, coloured pencil and India ink, 32 × 18 cm, Coll. Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, en dépôt au musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur, inv. CFR 124 © musée Rops.

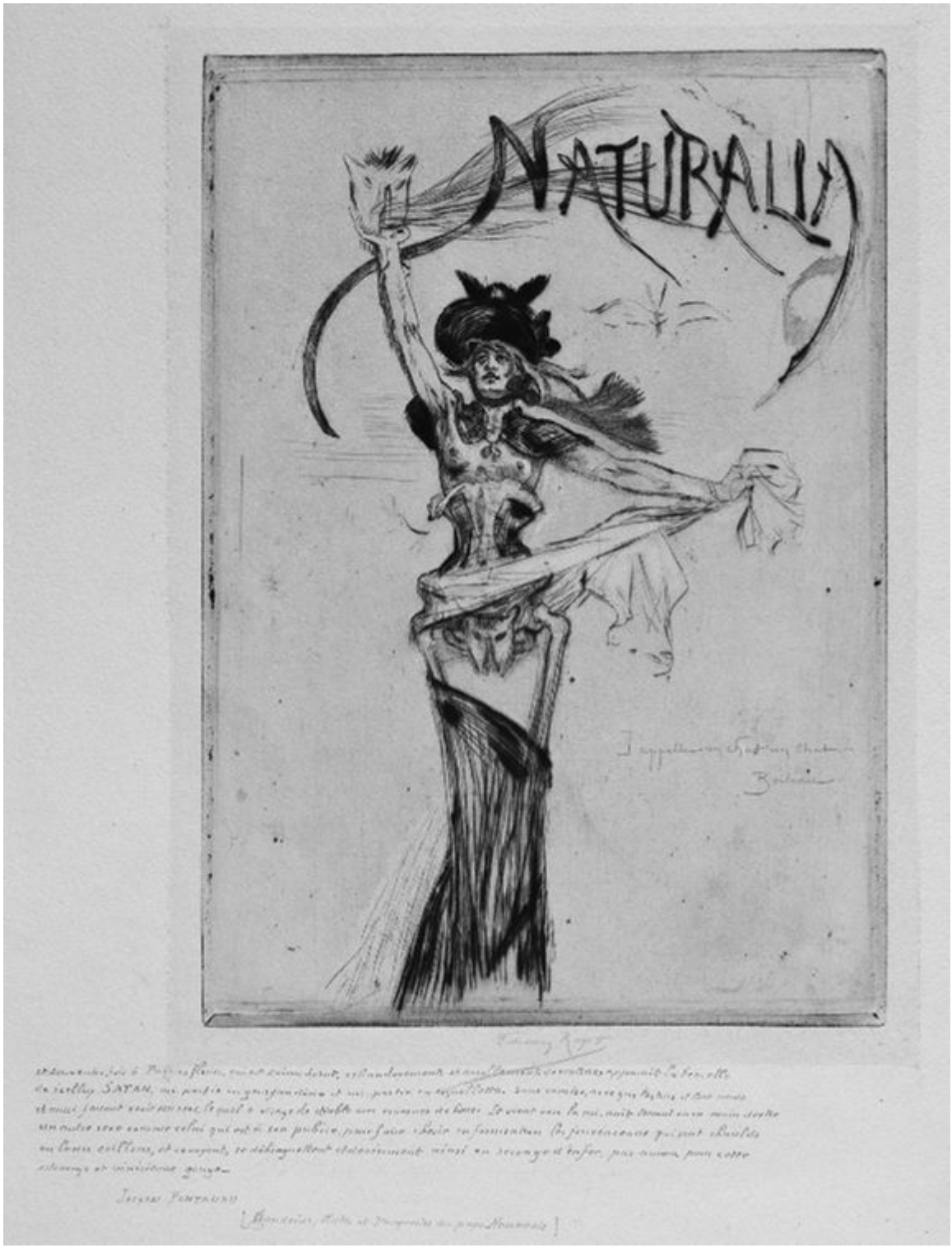

FIGURE 7.19 Félicien Rops, *Naturalia*, drypoint with coloured pencil and ink, 1875, 30 × 21 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur, inv. PER E773.2.P © Atelier de l'imagier / Musée Rops.

In our own time, Rops's art has been seen as 'a deeply Catholic search for knowledge of evil and acquaintance with the Devil' and he himself as 'a great Catholic artist indulging in a satanic ritual'.[170] His contemporaries could also perceive his works this way, as evidenced by an 1890 article in the *Journal de Bruxelles* which stated: 'We are not dealing here with little erotic scenes made for the delectation of old rakes. It is a profound, terrifying, entirely spiritual vision of the damnation of guilty flesh … never before has a Christian artist depicted the ravages produced by evil. … Rops is the true father of the infernal church.'[171] The prominent stamp Catholicism left on the artist's pictorial universe is unmistakable, but from a biographical perspective it is unreasonable to make him out to be a grave and spiritual man wrestling with the problem of evil, and forget that he was also a pornographer in some sense and had an extremely irreverent sense of humour. In fact, a great portion of his work consists of caricatures and jokes. Nevertheless, the part of his production depicting Satan and Satanism was felt by his contemporaries to be unsettling, profound, and grim. An important part of this impact may lie in the strongly pseudo-sacral and ritualistic features of his work. Symmetrical compositions akin to those in religious art, monumental marble stairs, grandiose demonic statues, torches, candles, and so on create the feeling of an actually existing Satanic cult. As far as we know, of course, no such cult in the sense of a group practising rituals of demon worship could be found at this time, but we can conceptualize it as a shared mental room that many authors and artists moved in and out of without practising any kind of Satanism in a religious sense. Rops was definitely one of the prime architects of this virtual cathedral to the Devil.[172] In this capacity, he became very important to authors like Huysmans when they decided to add to the construction of the fictional cult. The Belgian artist's endorsement of the view of woman as Satan's chosen one thus became a cornerstone in their own work, as evidenced by Huysmans's *Là-bas* (1891).

I have already mentioned how Huysmans two years before *Là-bas*, in *Certains* (1889), made some enthusiastic claims about Rops's ability to capture the eternal demonic feminine in his images. Huysmans had met Rops in person for the first time as early as 1876.[173] In his analysis of the artists' work in *Certains*, he takes the images as the starting point for proposing an

extensive genealogy of dangerous or wicked women from Eve onwards. The theme of the eternal evil feminine should be familiar by now, and Huysmans is very much a contributor to this tradition. Although women are not really literally possessed by the Devil, womankind is still, Huysmans deduces from Rops's art, 'the great vessel of iniquity and crime, the charnel house of misery and dishonour, the true introducer of the embassies delegated into our souls through all vices'.[174]

Joséphin Péladan was also among those who wrote comprehensive essays on Rops. His study was first published in *Jeune Belgique* in 1885, and then reprinted in an 1886 special issue of the Symbolist journal *La Plume* dedicated to Rops. Péladan, who was in many ways an anti-Decadent, here claims that the greater the influence of woman in a culture, the worse its deplorable decadence. He praises Rops for having realized this as well as the fact that 'today the possessed are the atheists and the positivists and that his [Satan's] fiend, in the category of morality, was woman; and he formulated this admirable synthesis: … Man possessed by Woman, Woman possessed by the Devil'.[175]

'AD MAJOREM DIABOLI GLORIAM'?: ROPS'S OWN INTENTIONS WITH THE PICTURES

So much for the moralistic reception among authors like Huysmans and Péladan. But was the artist himself really a guardian of public morality, a crusader against the influence of Satan and his lascivious associate woman? This must be considered doubtful. For one thing, Rops was decidedly no conformist. He married rich at age twenty-four, but was fairly soon separated from his wife (since they were Catholics, a divorce was not possible). He had moved to Paris before this, and there entered into an unconventional relationship with two sisters, who both bore him children. Simultaneously, he was having a series of love affairs with his models.[176] In short, Rops diverged quite clearly from bourgeoisie notions of decency. He was also a rebel against the established academies and associations of art, stating in a letter to a friend that he would like to 'conduct all institutions to the municipal slaughterhouse'.[177] In a letter that he wrote towards the end of his life to the young Belgian artist Louise Danse (1865–1948), Rops described himself as a 'pagan' rebel against the constraining morality of his time:

> I was born with an understanding of all that which strongly pertains to the ancient pagan cults. … All those things that terrify men, with their petty appetites and fear of the nameless caresses, have seemed to me since childhood to be simple, natural and beautiful. A man bestowing on the body of his mistress every ecstasy that his mouth can devise, two women covering each other with kisses —these have always seemed to me the most beautiful things in the world to celebrate with the pen or the pencil. Hence the hatred of fools and this art which no one has dared practice together with me.[178]

In spite of the libertine and tolerant world view professed by Rops here, his works often reflect the negative stereotypes surrounding, for example, lesbians and sexually promiscuous women. Whether Rops is a misogynist or not has been endlessly debated. Victor Arwas emphasizes the artist's love of woman and states: 'He invented the modern pin-up, praised the new woman, and acknowledged her right to sexual satisfaction.'[179] As we have seen, this is not quite the impression Rops's images left on some of his more influential contemporaries. He seems to have been most popular with those who saw woman as evil, and therefore a creature to be feared and subordinated. The only way to make his connecting of her with the Devil something positive would be if Rops himself was a Satanist in some sense and felt Satan was laudable. There seems to be no direct indications of this, though, except for playfully ambiguous declarations like that in his *Naturalia*, stated to be painted 'Ad majorem diaboli gloriam'.[180] If we look at, for example, the *Sataniques* series, it is extremely difficult to perceive any pro-Satanic sentiments whatsoever in it. However, such feelings can perhaps be found in the artist's self-portraits as Satan (n.d. and ca. 1860, respectively) (figures 7.20 and 7.21). If nothing else, they would seem to signal that Rops did not mind playing around with Satanic self-identification in a way that makes any assumptions of Catholic piety slightly problematic.

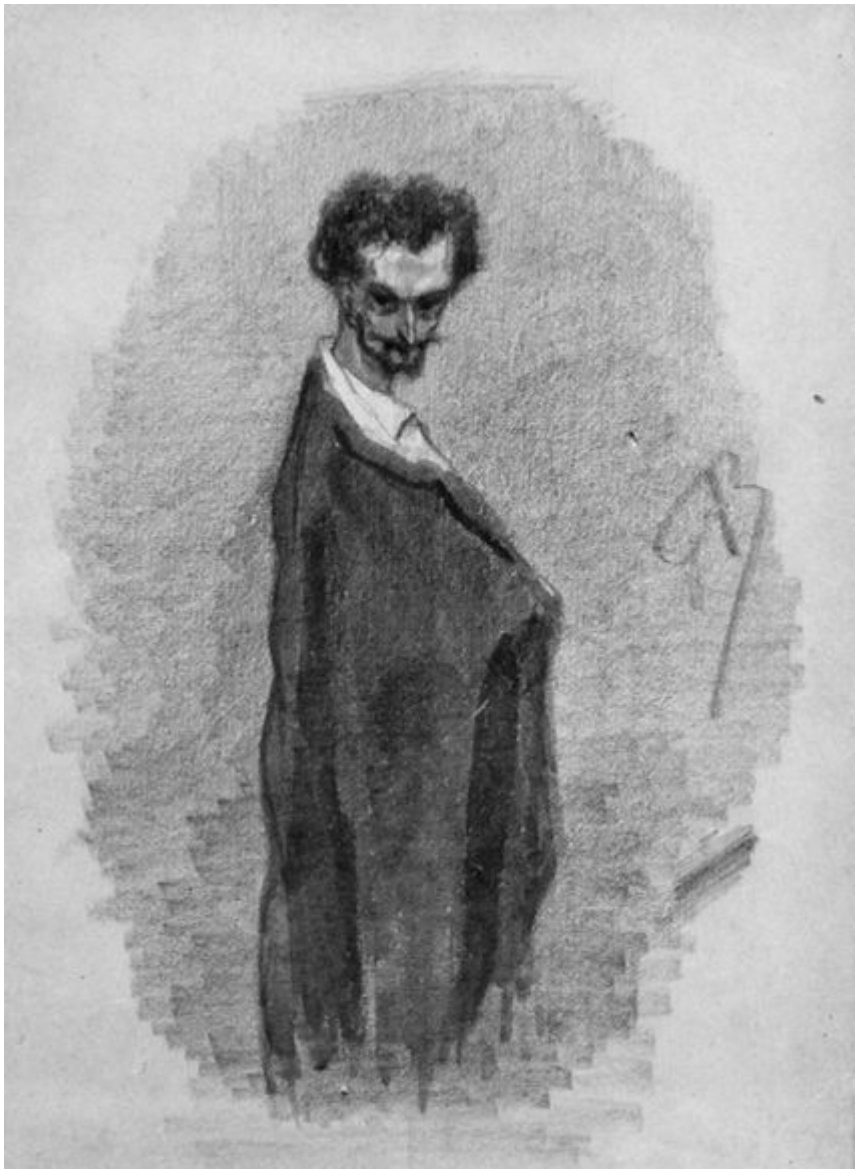

FIGURE 7.20 Félicien Rops, *Autoportrait satanique*, conté pencil, grease pencil, and India ink, 1860, 16 × 11 cm, Private Collection © Luc Schrobiltgen.

FIGURE 7.21 Félicien Rops, *Autoportrait*, sepia ink, no date, 10 × 6 cm, Coll. Musée Félicien Rops, Province de Namur, inv. D 47 © Musée Rops.

The artist's intentions, then, are decidedly difficult to pin down. Let us consider, for example, the case of Rops's *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*. In a letter to his cousin dated 20 February 1878, Rops insisted that his relative 'should dissuade people of any notion that this is an attack on religion or that it is intended as an erotic work'. The buyer of the piece interpreted it as blasphemous and apparently took a great deal of pleasure in this. In a letter—of 18 March 1878—thanking him for the purchase, Rops gave voice to the Satan who appears in the image, and no longer seemed very concerned with protesting his own piety:

> Here is more or less what I wanted my Satan (a black-clad Satan, a modern Satan representative of the eternal, combative spirit) to say to the blessed Anthony: 'I wish to show you, my good Anthony, that you are mad to worship your abstractions! … But if the gods have departed, Woman remains for you, and with the love of woman the fertile love of life itself. That is more or less what my Satan said. Unfortunately, a Satan dressed in black would have been even more misunderstood, so I was obliged to replace him with an imaginary Satan, which is more banal.[181]

The artist's own explanations of the picture were apparently very much bound to the context they were uttered in, and to whom. Bonnier and Leblanc nonetheless assert with great confidence: 'The full, happy figure of the woman compared to the insubstantial and desiccated monk clearly tells us which side Rops was on.'[182] His provocative words in the letter of March (in particular: 'The gods have departed, but Woman remains for you and with the love of woman the fertile love of life itself') do indeed seem a clear enough proclamation, as does his words in the letter to Louise Danse. Other statements by Rops, and his own lifestyle, also appear to bear this attitude out. However, the most interesting thing is how his contemporaries perceived the images. As shown, many of them actually saw Rops as a Catholic moralist (although one sometimes suspects they were so adamant in this matter in order to justify their own interest in artwork that was in some sense pornographic). The meaning of the images, as always, would to a great extent lie in the eye of the beholder, even though it is naturally also bound up with all the myriad intertexts that make the symbolism intelligible in the first place.

If we appraise specifically the moral (or anti-moralistic) message of *La Tentation*, those with libertine ideals of sexual indulgence (like the ones Rops himself seems to profess in the letter to the buyer) may see it as a condemnation of monkish asceticism. Conservative Christians might see it as a horror vision of detestable sensuous temptation that the saint bravely withstands. It could also work the other way around, with the first category of viewer seeing it just as the latter one, but in accordance with their own preferences then finding it an offensive piece of crude moralism—and vice versa, with the conservative perceiving it as an impious pleading for carnality and the rejection of Christianity. Most reactions that have come down to us indicate that Rops's art was largely received as a portrayal of woman as demonic in a negative sense. It is tremendously important for our present topic nonetheless, since it had such a powerful impact on the period's discourse on woman's relationship with the Devil. There is also a tendency

to sympathy with Satan and the carnal woman in some images. *La Tentation* is, as mentioned, one example. In a way, it is comparable to Gautier's 'La Morte amoureuse', where the carnal female representing Lucifer also comes across as the more appealing alternative. *La Pomme* is equally subversive in its idealizing depiction of Eve's collusion with the Serpent. As we will see in chapter 9, a similar visual celebration of this meeting appeared a few years later in a type of jewellery that seems to have been quite popular. Rops may very well have been a giver of impulses to such developments.

LÀ-BAS: A 'DOCUMENTARY' NOVEL AND ITS MISOGYNIST THEOLOGICAL INSPIRATION

Aside from Rops's pictures, the defining depiction of Satanism (as opposed to texts propagating Satanism, such as poetry celebrating the Devil or Blavatsky's esoteric speculations) in the late nineteenth century was J.-K. Huysmans's novel *Là-bas*. This text, as we will see, presented a strongly gendered portrayal of Devil worshippers, which both perpetuates and updates the picture provided by the *Malleus Maleficarum* and similar works. *Là-bas* was first published in early 1891, in instalments in the *Écho de Paris*, which has been described as 'one of the least sensational of the Paris newspapers'. Some conservative subscribers were outraged and threatened to cancel their subscription, but the net effect was still that the newspaper increased its circulation immensely with the help of this scandalous serial. It was published in book form in April and was immediately banned from being sold at railway bookstalls. Of course, a dash of mild censorship only helped enhance the *risqué* aura of the novel and made it sell even better.[183] It was also a success abroad and sold so well in Germany, for example, that Huysmans exclaimed in a letter: 'Blessed be that country held in aversion by France!'[184] In another letter, he stated: 'I have brought into the light again, even into fashion, Satanism, which had been done away with since the Middle Ages.'[185] Unsurprisingly, given this stir of interest in Satanism that it caused, Catholic reviewers were divided. Some thought the book 'Catholic and mystic', while others called for proceedings against its author.[186] *Là-bas* was the novel that made Huysmans famous to the wider reading audience and turned him into a public figure. As Robert Ziegler puts it, the writer was now '[b]esieged by reporters pounding on his door, demanding he disclose information on the secrets of Black Masses,

elemental spirits, satanic spells, the profanation of consecrated Hosts'.[187] A novel with a Black Mass in it was not unique in itself, and only a year earlier Catulle Mendès had published a particularly juicy account in his minor *succès de scandal*, the lesbian tragedy *Méphistophéla* (see chapter 8). The special appeal of Huysmans's book lay in the supposed 'authenticity' of the tale and the author's claim to actually have witnessed the Black Mass that forms the climax of the novel. But did he really?

Scholars have been debating this question for many years. Huysmans's friend Remy de Gourmont (though we should note their friendship had come to an end at this time) later said that the Black Mass was entirely invented and stated that he had helped the author in his research: 'It was I who hunted for details of this fantastic ceremony. I found none, for the simple reason that none exists.' That Gourmont helped with the research is also borne out in a letter by Huysmans. The latter's biographer Robert Baldick does not arrive at a definite conclusion in the matter, but mentions several supposedly reliable witnesses to whom Huysmans confided he had indeed attended a Satanist ritual.[188] Some of the details of the Mass, such as a grotesque effigy of Christ with an erect phallus, are obviously borrowed from Rops's pictures, and one might argue that this helps disprove a supposed 'documentary' source for the rite. However, it is quite possible that turn-of-the-century Parisian Satanists—had they existed—could have been inspired by the Belgian Decadent and decided to incorporate motifs devised by him in their rite, so this in itself does not really constitute certain evidence against Huysmans's claims. Huysmans could also have embellished real events by drawing on Rops. Henry R. T. Brandreth claims that we can 'be reasonably sure that he witnessed what he describes', arguing that Huysmans's Naturalist training (he had at one point been a disciple of Zola), where everything one writes is to be based on the observation of reality, would doubtless have compelled him to call on the local Satanists that were, after all, around.[189] The last point, though, is the crux of the matter: there is in fact no reliable documentation of Satanist groups in turn-of-the-century Paris whatsoever, only a large amount of false accusations and rumours.[190] It is therefore most reasonable to treat the portrayal of Satanism in *Là-bas* as entirely fictional.[191]

The manner in which the novel is written, in conformity with the documentary method of Naturalism, no doubt helped give it an air of

authenticity. It combines this method, which Huysmans still held in high regard, with an idealist longing for the metaphysical and supernatural.[192] While *Là-bas* treats a Decadent subject matter, it does not belong to the Decadent phalanx that unreservedly wallows in sin and corruption. Even Huysmans's celebrated 'breviary of Decadence' *À Rebours*, we must remember, ends on a pessimistic note and ultimately shows the emptiness of typical Decadent preoccupations, although many readers were still inspired to imitate the extravagancies of its anti-hero. The writer's alter ego in *Là-bas*, the protagonist Durtal, actually complains about the Decadent movement in literature, and opines that the authors in question try to hide their shallowness behind an abstruse writing style.[193] He grumbles that he is tired of 'the ignominious spectacle of the *fin de siècle*'.[194] An important part of this disgrace is phenomena like Spiritism and occultism, which he says people are merely drawn towards because nothing nobler is available to quench their thirst for the supernatural.[195] Our culture has been in constant decline since the Middle Ages, and our supposed "progress" is a complete sham, he later states.[196] Scorn is continuously heaped over the author's own era and its vulgarity.[197] This stance of harsh *Zeitkritik* frames the novel's depiction of Satanism, as well as the misogynist portrayal of women in conjunction with it. While Huysmans (and Durtal) is titillated by Satanism, his attitude towards it is ultimately one of moralist condemnation. The same dialectic of attraction and repulsion, with the latter eventually gaining the upper hand, also marks his relationship to the female Satanist who is something of the novel's antagonist.

As we will see, Huysmans portrays Satanism as a predominately feminine phenomenon, whereby he in effect slanders womankind and lends his support to the sentiments of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. He had displayed familiarity with this notoriously woman-hating tome already in *À Rebours*. His Decadent anti-hero des Esseintes there lovingly recalls the descriptions in the *Malleus* of the Black Mass, 'celebrated … on the back of a woman on all fours whose naked and repeatedly defiled rump served as altar, while the participants derisively took communion in the form of a black host stamped with the image of a he-goat'.[198] Looking at his 1884 novel, we can identify what must later have been among Huysmans's sources of inspiration for creating the female Satanists in *Là-bas*. For example, one of the few theological tracts des Esseintes is said to enjoy is Tertullian's *De cultu*

feminarum—the text from which the infamous quote about woman as the Devil's gateway stems.[199] It is hence no surprise that demonic women in general is one of the topics that fascinates him (and Huysmans) most. In his reverie over Moreau's painting of Salome, he declares her 'the symbolic deity of indestructible Lechery, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed Beauty'.[200] We can here discern a conflation of hysteria and perennial feminine wickedness that is of central importance in *Là-bas*.

The timelessness of evil in general is also an important point for Durtal, the protagonist of *Là-bas*. Disgusted with his time, he has retreated away from it into working on a novel about the fifteenth-century nobleman, child murderer, and "Satanist" Gilles de Rais. This historical figure's refined taste in reading, furniture, entertainment, and dining makes Huysmans declare him 'the Des Esseintes of the fifteenth century'.[201] He claims de Rais longed for the divine, even in his summonings of demons, and comments that the distance is short from 'exalted mysticism' to 'cynical Satanism'.[202] A friend, des Hermies, intimates that Satanism is alive and well in present-day Paris, and argues that all scandals involving it are hushed up because the proselytes are recruited from the upper classes.[203] He also asserts that there are several well-organized global networks of Satanists conspiring against all that is good.[204] Durtal now becomes obsessed with the idea of witnessing a Black Mass in order to become a fully-fledged expert on Satanism, and after much persuasion his mistress, one Hyacinthe Chantelouve, agrees to take him to one. This repulsive ritual forms the climax of the novel, and we will look at it in more detail later.

THE FLOWER OF EVIL CALLED HYACINTHE, AND OTHER HYSTERICAL SATANIST WOMEN

When he is first approached by Hyacinthe (who is married to one of his friends), and she tries to start an affair with him, Durtal ponders her split personality. There is both 'the prudent and rather formal salon hostess' and 'the passionate madwoman, the violent romantic, the hysterical in body, the nymphomaniac in spirit'.[205] It is only gradually that Durtal comes to realize that Mme Chantelouve, whom he has already classified as hysterical, is involved with Satanism.[206] When their flirtation is finally consummated, he notes in particular the coldness of her body. Having her in his arms is like

'embracing a corpse'.[207] Hyacinthe talks of herself as 'a monster of egotism' and astonishingly claims to be able to derive carnal pleasure in her dreams from intercourse with great men of literature like Byron and Baudelaire, and for that matter Durtal himself, through a certain esoteric technique. He immediately links this with stories about incubi and succubi, and speculates to himself that it might be some form of Satanic practice.[208] It is also hinted she may have caused the suicide of her first husband.[209]

Durtal remains deeply ambivalent about his mistress, both attracted and repulsed by her but deep down more or less constantly hateful towards her. He summarizes her contemptuously with the words: '[E]very defect of women united in a single one.'[210] After a subsequent meeting with her, he once again reflects on her peculiarly divided personality, which he now partitions into three layers: the reserved society woman, the one 'completely transformed in voice and gesture, a mud-spitting girl, losing all sense of shame', and finally 'the merciless vixen, a truly satanic woman, an utter bitch'.[211] After the Black Mass, Hyacinthe takes Durtal to an abysmally substandard room above a wine shop, where she again seduces him. Only after they have made love does he discover that she has littered the bed with fragments of the Eucharist from the mass. The sacrilegious act of distasteful lovemaking on top of what Durtal, previously a sceptic, now begins to think might just actually be the body of Christ makes him decide to finally sever all ties with Mme Chantelouve.[212]

As Jennifer Birkett points out, she here 'becomes an Eve, making him sin, while he pleads innocence and remorse'.[213] In accordance with this negative view of woman as temptress, the book contains several unrelated misogynist tirades, for example, about 'the memories of the girls he had known when he was young'. Durtal here bewails 'the lies, the encouragements and the infidelities, the pitiless spiritual baseness of women who are still young'.[214] Mature (or at least, we can assume, more mature) society women fare no better when he later deplores that they are the primary market for novels and that this type of person, 'a silly goose', makes or breaks an author.[215] Pretty much the only woman in the novel whom Huysmans does not put down is the bell-ringer Carhaix's elderly wife, a pious woman whose only function and desire seems to be to serve the men food.

True to this outlook, Satanism is gendered as a womanly phenomenon. When they arrive at the former Ursuline convent where the Black Mass is to

take place, the affected voice and heavy makeup of the man who admits them makes Durtal think that he has 'stumbled into a lair of sodomites'.[216] Though present, male homosexuals are not, however, the dominant element, and upon entering the chapel Durtal notes 'that there were very few men, and many women'.[217] Even the homosexual men, for that sake, are effeminate rather than manly, wherefore they too can be seen as part of a feminization of Satanism. Devil worship is not an activity for the truly masculine in Huysmans's fictional universe, nor for the fully sane. That the gathering place of the Satanists is an old Ursuline convent—that is, a nunnery rather than a monastery—also signals the womanly nature of the diabolical cult. The climax of the mass is described in a manner that obviously draws on the behaviour of inmates in insane asylums (with which, as we shall see, Huysmans had some familiarity):

> [W]omen who had fallen on the carpets were writhing. One of them seemed to be activated by a spring, threw herself down on her stomach and waved her legs in the air; another, suddenly afflicted by a hideous squint, clucked and then, after she had fallen silent, remained with her jaw gaping, the tongue rolled back, the tip pressed against her upper palate; yet another, her flesh swelling and turning livid, her pupils dilated, allowed her head to loll wildly from side to side, suddenly jerking it back into place and raking her breast with her nails; a fourth, sprawling on her back, undid her skirts and displayed her naked belly, distended, enormous, before her face convulsed into a terrible grimace as she stuck out her tongue without being able to retract it, white and frayed along the edges, from a mouth oozing blood and full of red teeth.[218]

These outlandish antics are explicitly framed as clinical insanity, as the authorial voice speaks of 'hysteria' and states that the chapel is 'like the padded cells in a madhouse'.[219] When Durtal tells his friend des Hermies about the event, the latter coolly comments that much of what he has witnessed is indeed 'familiar at the madhouses'.[220] In contradiction to this evident pathologization of Satanism, Huysmans had expressed in a letter of 7 February 1890 (addressed to the bizarre heterodox cult leader Abbé Boullan) that he was 'tired of the systems of Charcot, who has tried to prove to me that demoniality is a kind of hysteria'.[221] Indeed, Huysmans had been one of the many authors visiting Charcot's spectacular public lectures.[222] As discussed in chapter 6, some psychiatrists viewed hysteria not only as an explanation for the witch trials of old, but as a devious means to escape the (in their eyes fully justifiable) pressures on women in a patriarchal culture. Situating Huysmans's portrayal of female Satanists as hysterics in such a context gives it a new meaning, which would probably have been evident to

many contemporary readers. The women in the Satanist congregation, including Mme Chantelouve, are then, in some sense, escapees from the rules and demands of male society. Further, they can be linked to the negative stereotype of feminists as hysterics, a 'shrieking sisterhood', as Eliza Lynn Linton dismissively calls them in her polemic (see chapter 6).[223]

Hysteria and neurosis is a major point of contention in the debates between intellectuals that occupy much space in *Là-bas*. For example, des Hermies states that 'the affiliates of Satanism are mystics of a vile order, but they are mystics. However, it is most likely that their strivings towards the otherworld of Evil are connected with the disorders of their frenzied senses, for lust is the mother of Demonism.'[224] This might give the impression that Durtal's friend views life exclusively in the cold light of natural science. Nothing could in fact be further from the truth, and he has earlier made claims that render his statement that Satanism is pathological quite inconsistent. Regarding demonic possession, which positivist men of medicine claim can be reduced simply to an expression of hysteria, des Hermies asks 'is a woman possessed because she is hysterical, or is she hysterical because she is possessed?' and then lays down that '[o]nly the Church can answer, science cannot'.[225] Durtal himself voices similar opinions in a conversation with Mme Chantelouve, stating that 'the efforts of modern science have done nothing but confirm the discoveries of the magic of the past'.[226] In other words, the conclusions of the medical men are ultimately repudiated as reductionist, and their findings are seen simply as an affirmation of a Catholic or magical world view. A medical label or "explanation" is in itself meaningless, since the malady delineated by the man in the white robe could still just as well be caused by demons. In an antipositivist move, Huysmans transposes hysteria and Satanism to the realm of the demonic once more, and woman's ties to a fairly literal force of darkness are confirmed.

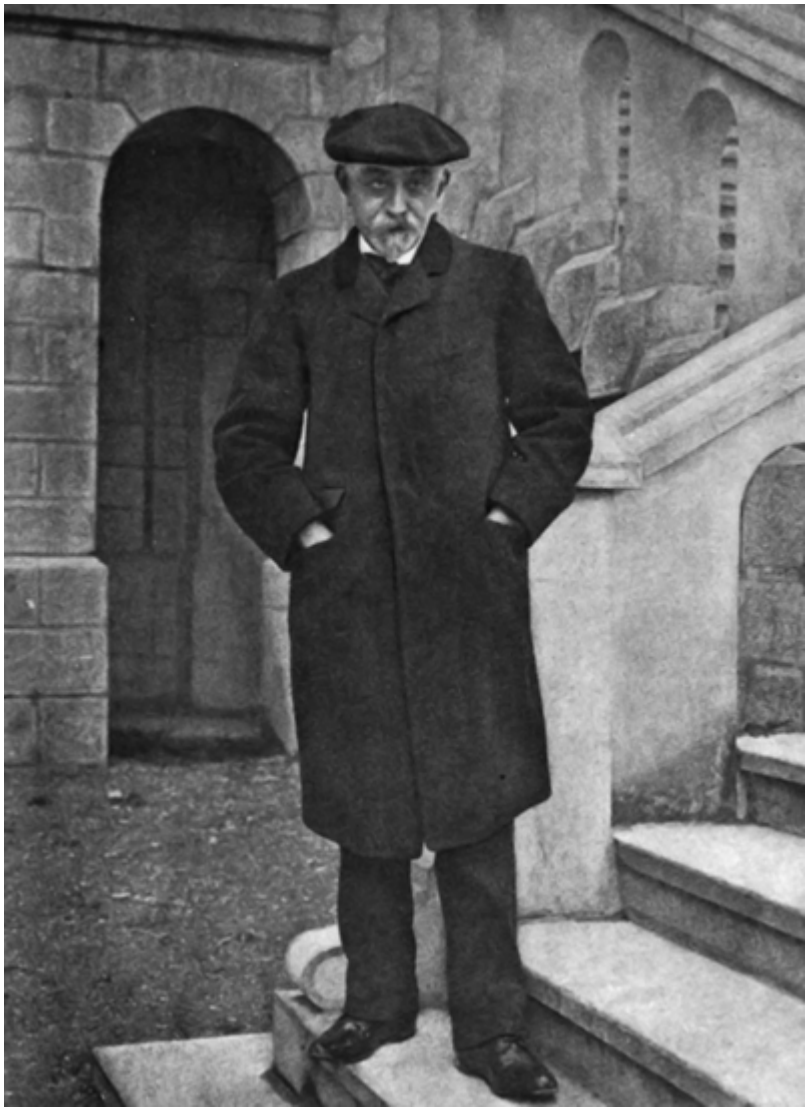

FIGURE 7.22 J.-K. Huysmans (1848–1907), author of *Là-bas*.

SATANISM AS (SEXUAL) NEUROSIS AND ANTI-CAPITALISM

To fully comprehend the portrayal of Mme Chantelouve, we now turn to the content of the Satanic ritual that serves as the narrative's central set piece. What sort of ideological positions are represented in it? The Black Mass is celebrated by an apostate priest, Canon Docre, who declaims a long blasphemous litany to Satan, which echoes the proto-socialist medieval Satanism Michelet had speculated about: 'Thou who art the champion of the poor, and the staff of the vanquished, you are the one who endows them with hypocrisy, ingratitude and pride, that they may defend themselves against the

assaults from the Children of God, from the Rich!'[227] However, the endowment of the poor with 'hypocrisy' and 'ingratitude' indicate that this is far from a benevolent and kind Satan, and that Huysmans's portrayal is not particularly sympathetic towards either Satan or the unfortunate in society. Even things that might be taken as positive, such as the designation of Satan as the 'logical God', are hardly meant as eulogy, since—as has been seen numerous times in the novel—Huysmans was very sceptical towards positivism and rationalism, preferring what he perceived as the poetic mysticism of the Middle Ages (he would later return to the Catholic Church mostly on these grounds).[228] In the world view propagated by the novel, then, logic and reason are not necessarily laudable. Satan is also painted as the god of homosexuality ('the love which is sterile and reproved') and prostitution. Further, Docre ties the Devil to neurosis and hysteria.[229] Huysmans, in other words, has the Satanists themselves confirm the pathological nature of their condition (though, as we have seen, a medical aetiology is only a half-way explanation in Huysmans's eyes). He does not elevate or whitewash Satan even through the words of the officiant at the Black Mass, but keeps the figure almost entirely evil and negative. The Devil is here a god of wickedness, not—even in the view of his adherents—a misunderstood angel of light.

Having hymned Satan, Docre proceeds to defame the Son of God: 'Thou hast forgotten the poverty Thou didst preach, favoured vassal of the banks!'.[230] Surprisingly, the insults Docre hurl at Christ reflect Durtal's (and, in extension, Huysmans's) own intense disgust at capitalism and his conception of money itself as demonic in nature.[231] The Satanist, then, functions as another mouthpiece for the author's *Zeitkritik*, which is voiced through his slander of Christ rather than his praise of the Devil. The resulting vision of the universe is singularly bleak: Christ is no saviour, the meek are trampled underfoot and the poor have nowhere to turn but to a thoroughly terrible Satan. The Devil as the god of reason and Satanism as anti-capitalist are probably motifs borrowed from Michelet's *La Sorcière*, even though the totality is nothing like Michelet's hopeful counter-mythology. They could, of course, be derived from elsewhere, as these notions were floating around everywhere at the time, but a discussion of Michelet (where Huysmans dismisses him as a reliable historian, but praises his ability to bring the past to life) early in *Lá-bas* fingers him as the likely source.[232] The notion of the

female Satanist as a rebel against patriarchy, which is, as we will see, present in Huysmans's novel, may also be partly derived from here.

The Black Mass ends in a sexual orgy, and Mme Chantelouve is portrayed as highly libidinous throughout the whole novel. Satanist women, then, are identified as both hysterical and oversexed. This can to some extent stem from Huysmans's knowledge of medical theories. Yet, we should to an equal degree understand the significance of Satanic nymphomania in the novel as connected to the author's reading of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, where woman's carnality is held up as the reason for her propensity for witchcraft. Huysmans manages to combine early modern explanatory models with more recent understandings, in a manner quite typical of him. Satan was well-established as a symbol of sexual transgression, a fact we will return to in chapter 8. The connection between a whole catalogue of "forbidden" sexual practices and Satanism would also have been familiar to connoisseurs of subversive literature from Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* ('Philosophy in the Bedroom', 1795), where the licentious Mme de Saint-Ange in the midst of a transgressive sexual act holds up Lucifer as her god and inspirer.[233] Huysmans read this book in 1882 (and he references it in *À Rebours*). It therefore seems likely the portrait of Hyacinthe contains some reminiscences of Mme de Saint-Ange.[234]

Moving from the outer limits of "immoral" literature to its opposite, we can note Jennifer Birkett's claim that '*Là-bas* places decadent motifs in their proper context, by the bourgeois fireside', exemplified by how 'scabrous details of spell-casting' are interrupted 'with offers of extra carrots'. In Birkett's opinion, the later stages of 'Huysmans' involvement with decadence is increasingly an attempt to glamorise essentially middle-class and conventional values'.[235] I believe the picture to be more complicated than this. Although Durtal (Huysmans) in the end decisively turns his back on the femme fatale and her Satanist cohorts, he has displayed a fascination with the crimes of Gilles de Rais that clearly crosses the line into perversity, and he is scathing in his criticism of modernity and capitalism (figure 7.22). The latter animosity is interestingly shared by the officiant at the Black Mass, who is all the same not portrayed sympathetically. *Lá-bas* is certainly not a work of Satanist subversion of established values, but neither is it a straightforward celebration of the petite bourgeoisie. Rather, it represents a frustrated search for something beyond these poles of mindless complacent conformism or disgustingly bizarre transgression.

As mentioned, Huysmans almost single-handedly made Satanism—and the question whether it was actually practised in turn-of-the-century Europe—a major issue of debate in France as well as abroad. English esotericist Arthur Edward Waite remarks in his 1896 book *Devil-worship in France* that Huysmans's *Là-bas* 'has given currency to the Question of Lucifer, has promoted it from obscurity into prominence, and has made it the vogue of the moment'.[236] The debate over the authenticity of Huysmans's novel also extended to the question of whether his characters were modelled on real people. The evil Canon Docre was, Huysmans later claimed, based on the Abbé Louis Van Haecke (1829–1912) from Bruges, Belgium. It is doubtful that this old priest, who was incidentally very popular in his parish, really was a Satanist, and Huysmans was probably simply misinformed about him.[237] One source for this information was the person who herself served as the primary model for Mme Chantelouve in the novel, a certain Berthe Courrière (1852–1916), or Berthe de Courrière as she styled herself to claim a noble background. She and Huysmans met for the first time in 1889. Earlier, she had been the mistress of the sculptor Auguste Clésinger (1814–1883), and now she had taken up with the promising young author Remy de Gourmont (1858–1915), who wrote texts like the provocative *Lilith* (1892), discussed earlier in this chapter. In his book *Portraits du prochaine siècle* ('Portraits of the Next Century', 1894), Gourmont described her as a 'Kabbalist and occultist, educated in the history of the religions and philosophies of Asia, drawn to the charm of symbols, fascinated by the veil of Isis, initiated, by dangerous personal experiences, into the most formidable wonders of Black Magic'.[238] The veil of Isis might be a reference to Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877), and it is fully feasible that she may have been a Theosophist given her esoteric interests.[239] If so, it is, of course, possible that Blavatsky's Luciferianism could have instilled in her ideas that made her a suitable model for the Satanist lady in *Là-bas*. Courrière was mentally unstable and was twice detained in mental asylums. This fact may have strengthened Huysmans's ideas about Satanism as a pathological phenomenon.[240]

Courrière's occult interests were reflected in her lodgings. The Belgian Symbolist artist Henry de Groux (1866–1930) gave a vivid description of her eccentric taste in home decoration:

> Mme de Courrière's home is quite the oddest thing one could possibly imagine in the style of her half-pagan and supposedly half-Catholic world. Wherever one looks, one sees the paraphernalia of worship put to the most unexpected uses – chasubles, altar-cloths, monstrances, sorporals, dalmatics, candelabra with multi-coloured tapers flickering mysteriously in shadowy corners, and a superb eagle-lectern bearing upon its outstretched wings works by Félicien Rops or the Marquis de Sade. And in the suffocating atmosphere, the effluvia of benzoin, ambergris, and attar of roses mingle with those of incense.[241]

Robert Baldick notes that a 'sacrilegious impulse' seems to have governed her choice of décor.[242] Brian R. Banks claims that she performed 'half-religious, half-Satanic rituals' in her 'strange and temple-like' apartment.[243] The exact nature of these rituals remains vague, and throughout his book Banks uses the words Satanism and Satanic in a highly imprecise manner. We can note, however, that Courrière was a great admirer of George Sand, which may be relevant here considering the latter's sympathy for Satan in *Consuelo*.[244] That de Groux says she had pictures by Rops at home may also indicate some sort of enthusiasm for Satanism, though this, too, is only incidental evidence. As we have seen, Rops was received by many contemporaries as a moralist, a Catholic artist producing warning nightmare visions of Satanic activities. In spite of this, a self-styled occult femme fatale like Courrière apparently felt his work was inspiring. However, it is fully possible that she shared this view of Rops's work, and was completely non-Satanic in her occult interests. Worth mentioning as potential attestation of the opposite is Rachilde's assertion that Courrière carried with her a shopping bag from which she dispensed what she claimed were consecrated wafers to stray dogs.[245] If this is true, it certainly lends support to her being almost as much of a sinister blasphemer as the literary character Huysmans based on her. Courrière also supposedly had a taste for seducing priests.[246] During his many visits to Gourmont and his mistress, the hostess entertained Huysmans with her recollections of 'dangerous personal experiences' in the world of the occult. The Black Mass he later described could have come from this source, although it is doubtful if she had witnessed such a ritual either.[247] Huysmans also participated in a Spiritist séance at the couple's apartment, during which some rather dramatic table dancing occurred.[248]

Another model for Mme Chantelouve seems to have been a woman named Henriette Maillat, who had been Péladan's mistress (and the source of inspiration for the Princess d'Este in his 1884 novel *Le Vice Suprême*) before she started a relationship with Huysmans that lasted from 1888 to

1891. She was so displeased about their break-up that Huysmans eventually had to resort to the police to rid himself of her. It was her letters that he used almost verbatim as the basis for the ones from Mme Chantelouve in *Là-bas*.[249] Just like Mme Chantelouve, she claimed knowledge of the mysteries of incubi and succubi and said that she could use these insights to derive sexual pleasure from any man, living or dead.[250] Banks states that Maillat, like Courrière, 'indulged in black magic', but once again it is never specified exactly what this is supposed to mean.[251] Baldick (and Banks following him) suggests there were two further models for Mme Chantelouve: first, the wife of Huysmans's Catholic journalist friend Charles Buet and secondly Jeanne Jacquemin (1863–1938), the mistress of Marseilles painter Auguste Lauzet as well as an accomplished if underappreciated Symbolist artist herself.[252]

'HIS HEROINE, THAT'S ME!': WANTING TO BE THE EMANCIPATED MME CHANTELOUVE

Whatever the actual degree of engagement with Satanism and 'black magic' on the part of Courrière, Maillat, Jacquemin, or Mme Buet, it seems many female readers subsequently found the figure of Hyacinthe Chantelouve fascinating and wanted to emulate her or claim to be her real-life model. The portrait sketched of Chantelouve and the other Satanist women is hardly flattering, but even so, Jean Lorrain reports in his book of essays *Pelléastres: Le Poison de la littérature* ('Pelléastres: The Poison of Literature', 1910), a great many women were eager to avow parallels between themselves and Durtal's mistress:

> Mme Chantelouve! No-one in the world of artists is unaware that M Huysmans' book is a *roman à clef*. … Mme Chantelouve! The success of the volume was such that all recognized themselves. There was no brasserie in Montmartre, or studio in Montparnasse, where a little model, with eyes dilated by morphine and ether, did not rise, at the mere mention of Huysmans' name, to exclaim: 'His heroine, that's me!'
>
> There was a crowd of Madame Chantelouves on the market. One had the pale skin and chestnut-red hair of the lady; the other claimed as hers the sickly and colourless water, suddenly lit by a glitter of gold, of her strange green eyes; this one, finally, was claiming for hers the unusual coldness in love of her hysterical flesh.[253]

What might these women have found attractive about Huysmans's horrible Satanist harlot? Perhaps that she combines a considerable amount of agency and freedom with alluring sinister mystery (we will explore this type of

ominous glamour and role-play further in chapter 9). Mme Chantelouve is, after all, a strong-willed, egocentric woman, who follows her own whims, manipulates men, and propagates free love. When she describes the freedom she has demanded from her husband, to be able to take lovers and come and go as she pleases, Durtal scornfully exclaims, 'You limit in a strange manner the role of the husband in a marriage.' Her response to his explicitly patriarchal (Durtal's concern is with a perceived violation of the husband's authority and prerogatives) moral indignation is: 'I know that these ideas are not those of the world in which I live, nor do they seem to be your ideas. … But I have an iron will and I bend those who love me'.[254] A sexually free—and somehow demonic!—society lady with an iron will is close to the ideal propagated by, for example, the New Woman author George Egerton in England a couple of years later (see chapter 6). Huysmans's hateful portrait of Hyacinthe clearly resonates with a form of female emancipation current at this time, which did not focus on civil rights but sexual rights for women (this position, we can note, did nonetheless often overlap with other feminist postulations). Important agitators for this cause (or practitioners of its ideals)—for example, William Godwin, George Sand (a feminist role model in deed if not in words; see chapter 3), William Blake, and Percy Bysshe Shelley—had often also employed Satanism as a rhetorical tool in other contexts, making the conflation of the two in the figure of Durtal's mistress quite logical. Durtal and Huysmans may be disgusted with demands of free love (especially with women demanding such freedom), as seen in the depiction of Mme Chantelouve, but this was, we must remember, not an attitude shared by everyone. Certain readers, especially among the bohemian women who Lorrain says related so strongly to the main female character in *Là-bas*, would therefore conceivably have perceived the figure in the novel rather differently.

There are many intertexts that might have further helped shift the signification of Mme Chantelouve for this audience and others. In preceding chapters, we have already encountered numerous examples of how Satan and Satanism were connected with feminism in nineteenth-century culture, and the Devil had a generally good reputation as a positive symbol among freethinkers. One further example can be added. Liberties pertaining to sexuality and the body figure largely in the case of the seventeenth-century "Satanist" La Voisin, who was an associate of noble women at the court of Louis XIV. La Voisin—next to Huysmans's Mme Chantelouve probably the

most famous female Satanist for the nineteenth-century audience (at least in France)—was renowned as much for her activities as an abortionist as for her supposed Devil worship. Witches, too, had of course been seen as providers of abortions, which the church naturally condemned categorically (the notion of the witch as a slandered kindly midwife, however, only arose much later). In other words, women helping other women gain a forbidden power over female reproductive functions were to some extent tied up with historical examples of Satanism. Keeping to this established motif, Huysmans has Canon Docre say the following at the Black Mass: 'By the abortion of wombs made fecund during the forgetful abandon of our flesh thou dost save the honour of families, thou dost hasten the miscarriages of the mothers.'[255] What would later be called reproductive rights was an issue that was beginning to grow in importance in some types of feminism at the time, but which was perhaps even more prominent in anti-feminist propaganda portraying suffragettes as unmotherly and anti-family.[256] Hysteria (as mentioned in chapter 6) also had connotations of rebellion against social mores dictated by fathers and husbands, and the description of Mme Chantelouve and the other Satanist ladies as afflicted by this malady thus help further establish them as anti-patriarchal figures.

There is also a chance that hysteria played a part in making Mme Chantelouve a character some bohemian women felt they could relate strongly to. Martha Noel Evans has detailed how avant-garde artists freely and enthusiastically discussed a supposed link between hysteria and sexuality, and suggests that 'this link was one of the artists' strategies of revolt against the bourgeois mentality they saw as a threat to imagination and creativity'.[257] Thus, the cross-dressing of George Sand was considered "hysterical", and Flaubert would brag to her in letters of how strong his own hysterical tendencies were. In the eyes of some artists and writers, then, hysteria was intimately connected to artistic talent and perceived as 'a badge of courage in a revolt against bourgeois values'.[258] Arguing against hysteria being a female malady, doctors like Charcot and Richer emphasized that even working-class men with nothing effeminate about them whatsoever could be afflicted. Avant-garde artists, however, instead insisted on viewing hysteria as a form of over-developed refinement, or, in Mary Gluck's words, 'a privileged phenomenon that affirmed the passionate and expressive potential

of the self in modern culture'.[259] This might be one reason why the hysterical Mme Chantelouve was perceived with some enthusiasm in these circles.

The fact that Mme Chantelouve functions in the novel as a representative of Satanism, a potential escape route from conformism (though one that the protagonist in the end distances himself from), is another possible rational for her attractiveness to certain women: she—and Satanism—embodied freedom and emancipation from social mores. Of course, it is also thinkable that claiming spiritual kinship with her was something done to spice up one's womanly allure with a whiff of sulphur, in order to please male Decadent acquaintances. Regardless, we can here note that Oscar Wilde mentions the popularity among English women of a certain type of look inspired by the femmes fatales found on the canvases of the Pre-Raphaelite painters. This hints that the phenomenon of real women taking their fascination with transgressive female figures from art and literature to the extreme of using them as a role model for an actual look or lifestyle was something of an international circumstance.[260] Admittedly, it is difficult to map this in any exact manner, but the descriptions provided by Lorrain and Wilde are intriguing. They should, I believe, be related to the intentional slippage between fiction and reality, art and life, which was typical of the Decadent genre. For example, Huysmans and George Moore wrote "documentary" novels (*Lá-bas* and *Confessions*) in which the protagonists were thinly veiled versions of themselves exploring Decadent art and practices. *Le Décadent* published articles signed by fictional characters, such as Huysmans's des Esseintes.[261] Decadent homes were decorated in accordance with the aesthetic conventions of the genre, Decadents often dressed in an extravagant and overly refined manner similar to the characters in their novels, and so on. Simply put: male Decadents lived their literary creation. And so, it would seem, did the women who moved in this milieu, with others outside of these immediate circles also probably being influenced by this cultural impulse. Living out the role of the femme fatale entailed, at some level, a rejection of the social mores dictating what a good woman should be like. To say that this was an explicitly feminist attitude is to state too much, but it is reasonable to say that the assumption of this role had certain implications of subversive self-fashioning (even if this meant living up to the fantasies of male Decadents), agency, and rebelliousness. We will look more closely at such identity games in chapter 9.

A SATANIST SUPERMAN WITH A HEART AS WEAK AS WAX: STANISLAW PRZYBYSZEWSKI

Although Huysmans was the most influential author in the construction of turn-of-the-century discourse on Satanism, the Decadent with the most unceasing interest in Satanism was no doubt Stanislaw Przybyszewski (figure 7.23). As previously alluded to he was also a self-identified Satanist and could, since he propagated a relatively coherent and lasting system of thought centred on the Devil as a positive symbol, be called the first Satanist *sensu stricto*.[262] Earlier in this chapter, I have also mentioned that he was among the most consistent practitioners of the Decadent tactic of semantic inversion. Like Huysmans, who was his prime source of inspiration, Przybyszewski wrote about female Satanists, and to a great extent followed his French guru's characterization of Devil worship as a feminine activity. He predominantly focused on witches in his treatments of the theme of woman and Satan, and here important impulses came from Michelet. As with Michelet, we should approach Przybyszewski's portrait of the witch via his depiction of Satan. In this case, however, things are more complicated, since Satan is mainly held up as an admirable figure, while his followers, the witches, are on the whole demonized. Yet, Przybyszewski's ideas concerning women as more or less literally demonic were, on closer inspection, rather original (though they may seem utterly clichéd at first glance) and in some sense represent a celebration of such transgressive femininity. I will demonstrate this by paying close attention to the role of inversion and counter-discourse in general in his thinking. These features, intrinsic to Przybyszewski's bleak outlook, necessitate a reading of his portrayals of women different from the superficial indignation at his "misogyny" that would likely be most people's instinctual reaction.

When he made a name for himself as an author in the bohemian milieu of Berlin, Przybyszewski was a twenty-five-year-old former student of architecture and medicine, who had been expelled from the university due to his socialist activities.[263] His short stories and novels typically treated topics most contemporary critics felt were quite sordid—like anarchism, incest, and marital infidelity. Many of his friends considered Przybyszewski something of a demon in human form. He seems to have relished this image, probably doing his best to strengthen the idea of him as a sardonic Satan in the Byronic anti-hero mould. One friend later recalled: 'If we were to tell him … that he was a pederast, a consumptive, a drunk and a thief all in one, he would be

very flattered indeed.'[264] In reality, though, he was not quite as cruel, cold, and aloof as he wanted to appear. Once he met a destitute proletarian in the street, and after hearing about the poor man's difficult life proceeded to give him his pocket watch as well as all the money he had on him, leading the friend who was in Przybyszewski's company on the occasion to later write that 'this Satanist had a heart as weak as wax, and sensitive to human misery'.[265]

Przybyszewski's ideas deeply marked the world view of quite a few people who formed part of a loose network. For instance, after coming under the influence of Przybyszewski, the Polish painter Wojciech Weiss (1875–1950) wrote home to his parents from a trip to Paris: 'Baudelaireanism, Satanism, *woman as Satan*, the woman of Rops. Goya. I've started to make etchings. One has to speak in this way, to *propagate Satanism among the crowd*'.[266] Later, from the 1910s until at least 1925, German Decadent Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871–1943) held wildly popular lectures with the title *Die Religion des Satan*, based almost verbatim on one of Prybyszewski's books.[267] In the 1920s, the Satanic content in the teachings of the German esoteric order Fraternitas Saturni was inspired by Przybyszewski's ideas.[268] In short, it is clear his thinking had a noticeable impact on many others.

FIGURE 7.23 Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927), pioneering Satanist. Woodcut by Gustav Vigeland, no date. Photo by the Vigeland Museum. Note pointed ears, likely a reference to Satan or Pan.

The Przybyszewski text propagating Satanism most explicitly is *Die Synagoge des Satan* ('The Synagogue of Satan', 1897, first published as two articles in the journal *Der Kritik*, 1896–97), a small monograph on the history of Satanism. It borrows in form and content from *La Sorcière*, both texts being a sort of mixture between nominally detached historical scholarship and passionate, impressionistic passages closer to a prose poem.[269] When it comes to attacking the figure of God, Przybyszewski is considerably more caustic than Michelet, and he emphasizes God's function as an oppressor. The God of Christianity, he says, wishes to keep mankind in a childlike state and wants to extinguish its free will. Satan embodies lawlessness, curiosity, and titanic defiance. Just like in Michelet's book, science, philosophy, and art are brought forth through Satan's providence.[270] According to Przybyszewski, the Christian religion—the religion of the stupid masses—preaches 'Be poor in spirit and humble, be obedient, follow the example, don't think!'[271] In contrast to the 'humble slavery' Christianity propagates, Przybyszewski proposes 'proud sinning in the name of Satan-

instinct, Satan-nature, Satan-curiosity, and Satan-passion'.[272] To the Polish Decadent, Satan is 'the father of life, reproduction, progression, and the eternal return', while God and goodness is 'the negation of life, since all life is evil'.[273]

Satan, in Przybyszewski's opinion, is the ultimate freethinker. This makes him not only 'the first philosopher' but also 'the first anarchist'.[274] Considering Przybyszewski's socialist background, it is here easy to imagine an influence from Bakunin and Proudhon. A distinguishing feature of Przybyszewski's texts is how he constantly inverts established values and turns the usual meaning of words and mythical figures on its head, the prime example being his glorification of Satan. We have already seen earlier in this chapter how, in a similar move, he inverts the common usage of the word *degeneration* and proclaims that the so-called degenerate is a genius and a sign of progress.[275] In comparison to the Romantic Satanists, and even to his fellow Decadents, Przybyszewski goes exceptionally far in following through with Satan's proclamation in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: 'Evil, be thou my Good!' Przybyszewski, the ideologue of inversion, consistently takes negative figures or epithets (such as Satan, evil, or decadent) and reinterprets them as something positive. When reading his texts, we should always keep this in mind.

PRZYBYSZEWSKI'S WITCHES, THE FEMINIZATION OF SATAN, AND 'GOOD EVIL'

Michelet's *La Sorcière*, considered as a whole, is unequivocally a tribute to the witch as a praiseworthy heroine. The depiction of the figure in *Die Synagoge des Satan* is, as mentioned, slightly more perplexing. For the most part, Przybyszewski demonizes the witch and chimes in with the descriptions of her evil deeds to be found in the *Malleus Maleficarum* and elsewhere. Still, she is the helpmate of Satan, the god of 'evil' who is clearly idealized in the text. Przybyszewski highlights the hostile attitude of the Christian church towards woman in general, and how it rejected her as 'an unclean animal, a serpent of Satan'.[276] This is quite correct, he opines: she is indeed Satan's chosen one, and the prince of Hell loves her for being 'the eternal principle of evil, the founder of crime, the sourdough of life'.[277] These are strong words, which could be taken as pure misogyny. However, we must remember that when Przybyszewski talks of 'evil' he equates it with

evolution and life itself. Woman is 'the sourdough of life' precisely because she is evil incarnate. Przybyszewski's Satanism is an extreme form of counter-discourse, and the 'evil' of woman is therefore in fact something praiseworthy in this text. When a Satanist writes of the female gender's intimate ties to Satan, it naturally means something completely different compared to when a Christian does so.

Woman, Przybyszewski explains, has been Satan's beloved from the very beginning, and has been responsible for the 'popularisation and upholding of his cult'.[278] In fact, Satan himself was at first a female deity, but the only remaining sign of this at present is his breasts, 'hanging down over his belly like two sacks of flour'.[279] The idea of Satan having breasts is, as we have seen, familiar from, for example, Christian iconography, decks of Tarot cards, and the famous engraving of the devil-figure Baphomet by Éliphas Lévi. A more original hermaphroditical trait is to be found in Przybyszewski's assertion that the gigantic penis of the fallen angel has a vulva as its tip, an idea previously unheard of in demonological lore.[280] The feminization of his own god, Satan, that Przybyszewski engages in could perhaps, to some extent, be taken as a critique of the patriarchal character of Christianity and God the Father. Moreover, where the Christian Church has only male priests, the cult of Satan is apparently run primarily by female adherents.

According to Przybyszewski the view of women in the *Malleus Maleficarum* 'testifies of great expertise', but is still overly simplified. Just like Michelet in *La Sorcière*, Przybyszewski now shifts from a 'mythological' modus to a more rationalist one, and we are told that the witch was in fact the product of a mental illness of an epileptic nature. This illness gave her a number of curious physical abilities: a body that could be stretched out in strange ways and change shape, abnormally flexible joints, insensitivity to pain, miraculous powers of recuperation, and so on. She is also mentally aberrant, feeling 'an ecstatic pleasure when causing pain' and experiencing satisfaction only when she 'with greedy, fluttering hands burrows around in the bowels of a murdered child'.[281] Przybyszewski continues to indulge in his most perverted fantasies when describing the witches' sabbath, where the witch enters a 'nymphomaniac rage' and 'filth and revulsion become voluptuousness' to her.[282] This transitions into blood thirst, which she quenches by killing a child. She crushes its 'soft head

between her thighs and violently presses it into her genitalia with the words: Get in where you came from!'[283] If ever there were a text that would give Freudians and Jungians a field day, this must be it. Seldom have the concepts of the vagina dentata and the devouring mother found such concrete expression.

Passages like the preceding ones would seem to lay on the wickedness a bit thick even for a person who idealizes some types of "evil". The same must be said of the following description of the witches' Satanic code of inversion:

> All the civic and divine laws are inverted in her brain, and out of itself the terrible satanic code arises. You shall love Satan, honour him as God, and no one else than him. You shall despise and besmirch the name of Christ. You shall commemorate the holy days of the synagogue, and hate your father and mother. You shall kill men, women and above all children, since you thereby most deeply will offend the one who said: let the little children come to me. You shall commit adultery, fornication of all types, preferably those going against that which is natural, you shall rob, murder and destroy, you shall commit perjury and give false testimony.[284]

It is difficult to conciliate this image with the highly positive portrait painted of Satan at the beginning of the book. Perhaps Przybyszewski felt a pressure towards the end of the writing process to soften his Satanism somewhat, and steer the text towards a more conventional view of Devil worship as being plain bad. Whatever his reasons, the net effect ends up being a book that gives a highly incoherent impression. When read as a whole, it is difficult to interpret the image of the witch in the book in isolation from the idealization of Satan. The witch, being primarily a Satanist, therefore appears in a more positive light, and comes to symbolize something more favourable than merely the grotesque practices that are ascribed to her.[285]

EVIL WOMEN THEN AND NOW: PRZYBYSZEWSKI'S MODERN WITCHES

The theme of Satanism, especially Satanism practised by women, being very much alive in late nineteenth-century Europe is treated in more detail in *Auf den Wegen der Seele* ('On the Paths of the Soul', 1897), nominally an essay about sculptures. In a somewhat sneaky manner, Przybyszewski here presents his own views of the opposite sex as inherently satanic by first recapitulating the misogyny of the Church Fathers as well as Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, who, according to the essay, cried out: 'Woman is the wickedness, the passion, the disquiet, the mother of heresy, the witch and the

sabbath, woman is Satan himself!'[286] Employing this tactic of letting the authorities of old lay the foundation for his line of reasoning, Przybyszewski then proceeds to implicitly state that these opinions are still valid by drawing a parallel between witches and the women of his time. Here there are strong similarities to the demonization of fin-de-siècle feminists as witches, discussed in chapter 6.

Przybyszewski claims that the modern male's desire to elevate woman to a higher level of education resulted in an atmosphere of philosophical cynicism and atheism, where her evil urges grew in strength once more. Hereby, '[t]he Satan of Hysteria and boredom triumphs over woman' and '[n]ew Satanic churches have arisen: the Moulin Rouges, the Orpheums [a Dresden ballroom], the Blumensäle [a notorious Berlin dance hall]'.[287] The outward form may be new, but the core of woman and her evil remains the same:

> The fantastic dance of the medieval witch was replaced by the modern cancan, the witches' poisonous aphrodisiac retired by the morphine syringe, but the basic sentiment remained, the will to transgression and sacrilege, the will to a superhuman increase of sexual desire that can only find its outlet in perversity.[288]

This sounds like the words of a prudish moralist, describing the evils of the modern age, but it is hardly reasonable to understand a Satanist author like Przybyszewski in such a manner. Still, his writings display a constant tension between a more conventional denunciation of woman's vices and the celebration of "evil" that would make it logical to assume he is extolling witches and femmes fatales.

If we accept what he states in his memoirs, Przybyszewski was certainly no woman-hater. He there rejects Strindberg's ruminations on whether woman is a creature of a higher or lower order than man, and responds that she is neither higher nor lower, just different. The man who hates women, hates the woman inside himself, and the man-hating woman the man inside her, he inculcates.[289] All the same, Przybyszewski shows obvious misogynist tendencies in other texts, for instance, coming up with an aphorism like 'And even the truth of woman is an unconscious lie'.[290] This is in no way an aberration in the context of Decadence, which was to a great extent characterized by intense fear and hatred of woman. But in near equal measure, the Decadents were, as we have seen, fascinated by these figures, just like several of them found Satan appealing. To what degree there is an

all-out ‘sympathy for the Devil’, or the femme fatale, is often not entirely clear. In the case of Przybyszewski, we should probably not view his descriptions, in essays and fiction, of woman as evil and decadent as a condemnation. Decadence and evil are, after all, good things in his system. All the same, one often gets the feeling that he does not follow his own semantic inversion through to its logical finishing point, and that his argumentation houses more than a little genuine dread and loathing of the opposite sex. This ties in with the frequent portrayal of frightening femmes fatales in Przybyszewski’s purely literary works, where they are often described as vampires, animals, sadistic murderers, and monsters.[291]

Writing of Félicien Rops, Przybyszewski calls him ‘[t]he deepest gender psychologist of the century’, who has perceived what woman is like at her core:[292]

> The woman of a Félicien Rops is the woman who stands outside of every contingency and every time, the archetype of woman, Hecate, Medea; the woman of both apocalypse and transgression; the woman who once became ordained as priest and kissed the Devil’s behind; the woman who saves mankind through virility and who drags the same humanity down in disgust, filth and degeneracy.[293]

Here we can again note the insistence on the timelessness of the wicked woman, and the split in Przybyszewski’s characterization of her: she both saves mankind by bringing virility (being linked to the sexual drive, nature, and evolution) and drags it down in decadence (the decadence that Przybyszewski considered an integral part of his hallowed evolution). He goes on to elevate Rops as the equal of great philosophers and claims ‘his intaglio prints are a mighty philosophical system’, on the same level as Schopenhauer’s. This artist ‘has explored woman’s psychology with a boldness and a depth, in comparison to which the sick misogyny of a Strindberg looks merely like the vengefulness of sexual dissatisfaction’.[294] Another trait in the interpretation of Rops’s women typical of the time is an emphasis on hysteria and ecstasy: ‘The woman of a Rops is drawn into the whirlpool, she screams, she moans, she suffers, the blood overflows her brain, so that she forgets everything around her and surrenders to the “influx” of her master, Satan: she is always a sort of satanized holy Theresa.’[295]

Przybyszewski evinces similar thoughts elsewhere as well. In *Die Synagoge des Satan*, he objects strongly to the historical scholarship that has, inspired by the Enlightenment, attempted to dismiss the witches’ sabbath

as nothing more than medieval superstition. That is not to say the Devil actually appeared and celebrated feasts with his followers, but the gatherings themselves did take place. At these meetings, ecstatic dancing combined with narcotic poisons brought forth a hysterical and epileptic state in the women, which resulted in hallucinations. Hysteria could in other words be said to be the essence of the central ritual of Satanic witchcraft.[296] Further, regarding information on how Satanism is practiced around the year 1900, Przybyszewski refers to Huysmans's supposedly "documentary" *Là-bas* and claims that it shows a recurring trait in the Satanism of all eras to be 'hysterical women with somnambular propensities'.[297] The concept of hysteria as something that unifies medieval witches with certain turn-of-the-century women was in tune with contemporary scientific standpoints, as discussed in chapter 6. As a former student of medicine with a keen interest in psychology, Przybyszewski was, of course, familiar with the theories of Charcot and others concerning this matter. However, there existed an interesting ambiguity in the broader medical concept of neurosis. The highly influential *The Man of Genius* (1891) by Cesare Lombroso postulated that genius, in fact, is a form of neurosis.[298] It is perhaps in light of this view we should see Przybyszewski's portrayal of hysteria. If so, the hysteria of the witches would be another potentially positive trait in some sense.

There are also other indications of this. Elsewhere, Przybyszewski celebrated the ecstatic 'naked soul' and expressed a profound scepticism towards cold reasoning and the tyranny of the brain over the soul. Hence, hysterical ecstasy could hardly be a completely negative thing in his thinking. Yet, he still writes as if disgusted and horrified by the orgiastic witches. What are we to make of all these contradictions? In general, it is probably as a tribute to woman as valuable for mankind that we should understand Przybyszewski's constant stressing of her intimate relationship to Satan. When we read Przybyszewski's seemingly misogynist texts about witches then and now within his broader counter-discursive framework of semantic inversion, and pay careful attention to how he ascribes to woman an important role in human evolution, a plausible interpretation is that he is not at all slandering her. Rather, he pays homage to her as a vitally necessary representative of the evolutionary "good evil" around which his system is centred. In his stressing of woman as Satan's chosen one, Przybyszewski interlocks with the contemporary demonization of feminists as witches and creatures of the Devil, and he uses similar analogies between the activities of

modern women and witches (for example, cancan being the same as the dance at the witches' sabbath). But when a *Satanist* writes of woman as Satanic, it logically has a rather special meaning, and should in all likelihood be considered a form of celebration of the (Satanic) feminine.

CONCLUDING WORDS

Decadence is a genre intensely concerned with negotiating inversions and counter-readings. As a self-designation, it represented an appropriation of a pejorative term turned on its head. This happened gradually, with authors like Baudelaire and Gautier shifting its signification in essays they wrote in the 1850s and 1860s. Satanism, an inversion of Christianity, naturally fit well with such a project of counter-discourse. Even so, the genre is less Satanic than is commonly assumed, and many Decadents were ambivalent rather than wholeheartedly positive towards Satan. As an object of aesthetic pleasure and transgressive titillation, he was clearly popular among them, but he did not in any large-scale manner play the role of a symbolic freedom fighter observable in Romanticism. An explicit Satanist like Przybyszewski is hence an aberration rather than a representative example. Nonetheless, Decadence was closely connected to Satanism in the public mind, and in the critique formulated by its conservative enemies, like Max Nordau.

The figure of the femme fatale played a major part in Decadent literature and art, and some have wanted to see her as a response to anxieties concerning the New Woman. A common theme here was the inversion of the sacred feminine, with poets like Swinburne hymning the transcendent demonic feminine. Although hardly feminist, such literary creations lauded a femininity utterly different from the mild and obedient woman mainstream discourses dictated should be celebrated. To some extent, therefore, Decadence and more or less feminist attempts to move away from conventional gender roles overlapped. Further, the feminized Decadent male was in a way a male counterpart to the masculinized New Woman, both being part of a broader 'gender trouble'. This did not stop many male Decadents from being intensely misogynistic. At times unwittingly, they all the same contributed to a destabilization of gendered categories and ideals. The aggressively rebellious self-fashioning they indulged in also helped facilitate possibilities for women to create oppositional identities. As a whole, then, the genre was not consistently in opposition to hegemonic discursive

formations like patriarchy or Christianity, yet still tended to be ambiguously subversive or to create openings for subversion.

The most influential visual portrayals of Satanic women at the time were produced by Félicien Rops, who chiefly made such figures come across as disgusting and deplorable. He typically depicted them in sexual situations with a frightening Satan, or as the destroyers of males. At times, however, he could also turn out more sympathetic pictures, where he was seemingly almost on the side of the Devil and his mistresses. This attitude also finds support in his letters, in his openly libertine lifestyle (which reached truly extreme proportions in sharing a household with two sisters and fathering children with them both) and in his portrayals of himself as Satan. Still, many of his most enthusiastic admirers saw him as a pious moralist—a typical instance of the gap frequently found between the intentions of an artist and the reception of his or her work.

Among Rops's devotees, J.-K. Huysmans—author of the so-called breviary of Decadence, *À Rebours*—was a central figure. His bestselling novel *Là-bas* became the most prominent literary representation of Satanism in the period. The sinister Satanist Mme Chantelouve who seduces the protagonist is a self-governing woman with modern ideas about free love. She is also described as hysterical. As we have seen in chapter 6, hysteria carried connotations of feminism, and the independent Chantelouve can be seen as a caustic caricature of an emancipated New Woman. Certain bohemian females were undaunted and approached her as an object of identification, competing in claiming her various traits. Her drastic disobedience to her husband as well as to her lover made her embody an alluring liberation from social mores, and it is easy to see why this anti-heroine made those with such longings proclaim '*c'est moi!*' about her.

In Huysmans's fiction, Satanism was a feminine phenomenon. This was certainly not intended as a compliment to the fairer sex. Stanislaw Przybyszewski followed suit and affirmed that the cult of the Devil was primarily a female affair. Now coming from a self-professed Satanist, however, it is possible to interpret this as a critique of the patriarchal structure of Christianity. In a radical move, he even feminizes his own god, declaring that Satan was originally a female deity, who still retains breasts and a vulva at the tip of his penis as signs of this. In his memoirs, Przybyszewski explicitly distances himself from misogynist ideas. All the same, an indecisive attitude towards women is present throughout his œuvre,

and some of his descriptions of the gruesome crimes of medieval witches are hardly intended as eulogy. There are, in short, inconsistencies in his thinking. To a large extent, however, these seeming contradictions fade away, giving way to something quite logical and coherent, when considered as part of his Satanist world view and seen in terms of a Decadent counter-discourse taken to its extreme. Satanic feminist would hardly be suitable epithet to attach to Przybyszewski, but he should be seen as a significant contributor to notions of demonic femininity as somehow admirable. The evil of his witches represents an energizing form of transgression, and their crimes are seemingly somehow a stimulus to the evolution Przybyszewski sees as the highest good. Since Satan is the positive core metaphor of his entire philosophical system, his idea of this figure as originally female also in some sense up-valuates femininity.

Artists and authors like Swinburne, Wratislaw, Rops, Huysmans, and Przybyszewski all contributed in their own way to both the discourses of Demonized feminism and Satanic feminism. None of them can be said to explicitly have taken anything remotely approaching a feminist stance, however. Their significance for the main theme of the study lies in how their ideas were received by certain other individuals, and how they play a part in the strange circularity between extremely misogynist portrayals of evil women and some feminists denouncing patriarchy using a similar threatening symbolism. As in Decadence in general, the obsession with the femme fatale —in our three case studies of a straightforwardly Satanic variety—could serve to disrupt 'proper' femininity rather than function as a warning example. The women who perceived Mme Chantelouve to be appealing are a good example of this.

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[1] Ewers 1917, p. 199: 'Als der Teufel ein Weib ward, / Als sich Lilith / Die schwarzen Haare zum schweren Knoten schlang / … / Als sie Bourget las / Und Huysmans liebte / Als sie Maeterlincks Schweigen verstand / Und die Seele badete / In Gabriel d'Annunzios Farben'.

[2] Spackman 1999, p. 35.

[3] Cevasco 2001, p. 17.

[4] Brandreth 1963, p. 55.

[5] Baudelaire 1955, pp. 628–630.

[6] Constable, Potolsky, & Denisoff 1999, p. 8.

[7] For a discussion of Nisard's anti-decadence, see Calinescu 1977/1987, pp. 157–161; North 1999, pp. 83–86.

[8] Baudelaire was immensely important in other countries as well. For example, the Swedish Decadent Emil Kléen (1868–1898) was a devout disciple of his. George Moore remarks, with some hyperbole, about the French poet's influence: 'The village maiden goes to her Faust; the children of the nineteenth century go to you, O Baudelaire, and having tasted of your deadly delight all hope of repentance is vain' (Moore 1889/1972, pp. 80–81).

[9] Quoted in Seigel 1986, p. 257. The foremost scandal surrounding Verlaine was his homosexual liaisons, in conjunction with which he shot his young lover Arthur Rimbaud in the wrist, an act for which he was subsequently jailed.

[10] Quoted in Cevasco 2001, p. 18. The first stanza of Verlaine's sonnet 'Langueur' (published in *Le Chat noir* on 26 May 1886) famously declares 'Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence, / Qui regarde passer les grands Barbares blancs / En composant des acrostiches indolents / D'un style d'or où la langueur du soleil danse'. Some have claimed this to represent the true inception of a self-declared Decadent movement in literature. For a problematization of this view, see Stephan 1969 and my discussion in this chapter.

[11] Moore 1889/1972, pp. 125, 140.

[12] Seigel 1986, p. 102.

[13] Calinescu 1977/1987, pp. 161–162, 168.

[14] Pierrot 1981, p. 47.

[15] Cevasco 2001, pp. 18–19; Seigel 1986, p. 257. *Le Décadent* was published between April 1886 and April 1888.

[16] Cevasco 2001, pp. 35–36.

[17] Sjöblad 1975, p. 32.

[18] Pierrot 1981, pp. 5–9.

[19] For a sampling of German Decadent writing, see *The Dedalus Book of German Decadence* (1994), edited by Ray Furness. For a useful brief introduction to Decadence in Germany and Austria, see Vilain 2001, which, however, unfortunately merely mentions the intriguing Ewers in passing. On Ewers, see the exhaustive biography by Wilfried Kugel (1992).

[20] Seigel 1986, p. 257.

[21] Sjöblad 1975, p. 33. Distinguishing between an allegory and a symbol is, of course, not always easy either.

[22] Hustvedt 1998, p. 10.

[23] Naturally, numerous members of the bourgeoisie probably also at least paid lip-service to such values, although their actual lifestyle was centred on accumulation of wealth.

[24] Moore 1889/1972, p. 112.

[25] Constable, Potolsky, & Denisoff 1999, pp. 25–26. French novelist Maurice Barrès (1862–1923) can be seen as a figure similar to D'Annunzio in his combining of Decadent aesthetics with political agitation for a form of fascism.

[26] Even Huysman's arch-Decadent anti-hero des Esseintes in the end comes to the conclusion that his attitude to life is untenable, and the final chapter of the novel indicates he might turn to Christianity to

find peace.

[27] Kaminsky 1976, p. 376.

[28] An unmistakably negative depiction of Decadent themes and motifs, then, is not Decadent.

[29] Hustvedt 1998, p. 14.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., pp. 14–15. Cf. Calinescu 1977/1987, pp. 163, 174–175.

[32] Calinescu 1977/1987, p. 162.

[33] Quoted in ibid., p. 176.

[34] Quoted in ibid., p. 177.

[35] E.g. Gilman 1979, p. 180; Fischer 1969, p. 139.

[36] Cevasco 2001, pp. 33–34. George Moore characterizes himself, during his involvement with the Parisian Symbolist-Decadent milieu, with three words: 'feminine, morbid, perverse', with the latter according to him being most important (Moore 1889/1972, p. 76). As for the question of femininity, we will return to it.

[37] Huysmans 2009, pp. 22, 44, 160. For further examples of this, see Moore 1889/1972, pp. 125, 140.

[38] Wilson 1975, p. 175.

[39] Ibid., pp. 176–177. Quote on p. 177.

[40] Bernheimer 1999, p. 55. The Decadent celebration of artificiality extended beyond style and also encompassed material objects. An extremely stereotypical example of this is the minor English Decadent Theodore Wratislaw's poem 'Hothouse Flowers', from the collection *Orchids* (1896): 'I hate the flower of wood or common field. / I cannot love the primrose nor regret / The death of any shrinking violet, / Nor even the cultured garden's banal yield. // … I love those flowers reared by man's careful art, / Of heady scents and colors: strong of heart / Or weak that die beneath the touch of knife'.

[41] Hanson 1997, p. 2.

[42] Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 6, p. 37: 'nervöser Überreizung', 'psychotischen Fieberzuständen'. The case in point here is Max Nordau, influential physician and author of the massive bestseller *Entartung* (1892). Przybyszewski angrily writes: 'The normal is Max Nordau, the brainless philosopher of the mob, the degenerate is Nietzsche!' ('Das Normale, das ist Max Nordau, der gehirnlose Philosoph des Pöbels, das Degenerierte, das ist Nietzsche!').

[43] This important work was first published in Italian in 1930 as *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* and was instrumental in establishing the study of Decadence as a respectable scholarly pursuit.

[44] Ahlund 1994, pp. 13, 16.

[45] Kaminsky 1976, p. 377.

[46] Cevasco 2001, p. 153. For a discussion of a text by Stenbock, see chapter 5.

[47] Quoted in ibid., p. 157.

[48] Pincus-Witten 1976, p. 113.

[49] For a first-hand account of Przybyszewski's posturing as Satan, see Thiis 1933, p. 221. On the notion of the artist as Satan, see also Faxneld 2014c.

[50] Nordau's nationality is complicated, since he was born in Budapest, then part of the Austrian Empire, which after 1867 became the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His family was Jewish and had German as their first language.

[51] Hustvedt 1998, p. 12. Decadence soon became not only an object of moralist outrage but also of a different kind of attack: parody and satire. One famous example is Robert Hichens *The Green Carnation* (published anonymously in 1894). In some ways, however, parody was quite superfluous, since even Huysmans's *À Rebours* is extremely self-ironic and frequently crosses the line into parodic ridicule of its Decadent protagonist. Contrary to some stereotypes, many Decadents had a sense of humour and could be quite self-deprecating.

[52] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 99. Original: 'Alle Hysteriker, alle Entarteten'; 'nach Swinburne die Unzucht wider der Natur, das Verbrechen, die Hölle und den Teufel gepriesen' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 1, p. 178). The English quotes are from the translation of 1895, republished by Nebraska University Press in 1993. This translation became so popular that it went through seven editions between February and August of 1895. The publication was timely, since it coincided with the trial against Oscar Wilde and a moral crusade against a perceived invasion and corruption of England by continental Decadent literature. In many ways, Nordau's book belonged to the mainstream of contemporary thought, and it was even given a positive review in the *British Medical Journal* as well as in *Science* (Kline 1992, pp. 11–13, 161).

[53] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 119. Original: 'gealterten bösen Engels' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 1, p. 215).

[54] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 243; Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 7.

[55] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 260. Original: 'hat eine entschiedene Vorliebe für das Böse, schätzt es bei Anderen, thut es selbst jedesmal, wenn er nach Reigung handeln kann, und erkennt ihm die eigene Schönheit zu, die der gesunde Mensch am Guten findet' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 36).

[56] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 261. Original: 'Diaboliker und Decadenten unterscheiden sich von den Verbrechern lediglich darin, daß jene blos träumen und Worte machen' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 37).

[57] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 275. Original: 'sind sie auch nur gegen das Gute kalt und gleichgiltig, nicht aber gegen das Schlechte, dieses zieht sie vielmehr ebenso an und erfüllt sie mit ebensolchen Lustgefühlen wie die gesunde Mehrheit der Menschen das Gute' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 63).

[58] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 292. Original: 'jener Mystizismus, der beim Entarteten nie fehlt'; 'Die Liebe zum Bösen kann naturgemäß nur dann die Form der Teufelsverehrung, des Diabolismus, annehmen, wenn man gläubig ist, wenn man Uebernatürliches für wirklich hält' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 90).

[59] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 295. Original: 'Die Versicherung Baudelaires selbst, daß sein Satanismus nur eine einstudirte Rolle ist, hat keinerlei Werth' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 95).

[60] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 296. Original: 'täuscht den Psychologen nicht' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 95).

[61] Nordau [1892]/1993, p. 297. Original: 'schufen eine Dichtung des Teufelsdienstes, die an die verrüchtesten Aussagen mittelalterlicher Hexen bei der peinlichen Frage erinnert'; 'Männer und Weiber sich in der scheußlichsten Unzucht wälzen und dabei fortwährend den Teufel anrufen, ihn preisen und ihm dienen' (Nordau [1892]/1893, vol. 2, p. 98).

[62] While Satanism, in short, was not something fully embraced by most Decadents, esotericism in general had a more deep-going impact. The influence of Éliphas Lévi on key figures in the Symbolist

and Decadent movements like Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Mallarmé, and W. B. Yeats has been well documented. For example, Baudelaire's poem 'Correspondences' shares its title with an 1845 poem by Lévi, and essentially treats the same subject (Lowrie 1974, p. 102). The two also knew each other in private and collaborated on a piece of yellow journalism (Senior 1959, p. 88). Swedenborg, too, was a major influence on many key authors (Pierrot 1981, p. 97). Esotericism, then, was a crucial building block in the outlook of the literary avant-garde in the nineteenth century.

63 Wilson 1975, p. 179.

64 Baudelaire 1961, p. 116: 'Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!'

65 Ibid., p. 118: 'Gloire et louange à toi, Satan, dans les hauteurs / Du Ciel, où tu régnas, et dans les profondeurs / De l'Enfer, où, vaincu, tu rêves en silence! / Fais que mon âme un jour, sous l'Arbre de Science, / Près de toi se repose, à l'heure où sur ton front / Comme un Temple nouveau ses rameaux s'épandront!'

66 Ibid., p. 168: 'Insulté ce que nous aimons / Et flatté ce qui nous rebute'. We can note, however, that for the same edition 'La Prière d'un païen' ('The Prayer of a Pagan') was also added, where Baudelaire celebrates sensuality as a goddess.

67 For this view, see e.g. Emmanuel 1970.

68 Rollinat [1883]/1972, p. 326: 'Ô toi qui m'as si souvent visité, / Satan! vieux roi de la perversité, / Fais-moi la grâce, ô sulfureux Messire, / Par un minuit lugubrement tinté, / De voir entrer chez moi la dame en cire!' The poem is dedicated to Félicien Rops.

69 Kléen 1895, p. 28: 'Du *Satanas* mig nämner— / *det* namnet stolt jag bär'.

70 Ibid. Even in remote Sweden, the supposed dangers of Decadence caused moral outrage, expressed, for example, in Nordau epigone Karl Gasslander's *Dekadanslitteraturen: En nationalfara för Sveriges folk* ('Decadent Literature: A National Danger to the People of Sweden', 1912). He warns the public that '[a]n aestheticism without ethics is a dangerous game of mischief with the most precious spiritual possessions of the race' (p. 26: 'En etiklös esteticsim är en farlig okynneslek med släktets dyrbaraste andliga ägodelar').

71 Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 7, p. 226: 'Satanismus ohne den Diebsthal heiliger Hostien, ohne zumindest das Blut vorzeitig geborner Embryos—was für ein armseiliger, langweiliger und prosaischer Satanismus!'

72 Moore 1889/1972, pp. 123–124.

73 For more on d'Adelswärd-Fersen's novel, see chapter 8.

74 Starkie 1960/1962, p. 85.

75 Huysmans 2009, pp. 64–68.

76 Ibid., p. 68. I quote from the translation by Margaret Mauldon. Original: 'le sens artiste était subjugé par les scènes si bien calculées des catholiques; à ces souvenirs, ses nerfs tressaillaient, puis en une subite rébellion, en une rapide volte, des idées monstrueuses naissaient en lui, des idées de ces sacrilèges prévus par le manuel des confesseurs, des ignominieux et impurs abus de l'eau bénite et de l'huile sainte. En face d'un Dieu omnipotent, se dressait maintenant un rival plein de force, le Démon, et une affreuse grandeur lui semblait devoir résulter d'un crime pratiqué, en pleine église par un croyant s'acharnant, dans une horrible allégresse, dans une joie toute sadique, à blasphémer, à couvrir d'outrages, à abreuver d'opprobres, les choses révérées; des folies de magie, de messe noire, de sabbat, des épouvantes de possessions et d'exorcismes se levaient' (Huysmans 1977, p. 178).

[77] Huysmans 2009, p. 83. Original: 'de ses scènes vertigineuses, de ses sorcières chevauchant des chats, … de ses succubes, de ses démons et de ses nains' (Huysmans 1977, pp. 202–203). Cf. Baudelaire 1961, p. 13.

[78] Huysmans 2009, p. 131. Original: 'qui découle de l'existence même d'une religion, ne peut être intentionnellement et pertinemment accompli que par un croyant, car l'homme n'éprouverait aucune allégresse à profaner une loi qui lui serait ou indifférente ou inconnue' (Huysmans 1977, p. 273).

[79] For an example of a scholar who has taken over this view, see Weir 1995, p. 173 (the book is otherwise excellent).

[80] Pierrot 1981, p. 124.

[81] Quoted in Pierrot 1981, p. 124. Original: 'La femme est le Contraire du Dandy. Donc elle doit faire horreur. La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif, et elle veut boire. Elle est en rut et elle veut être foutue. Le beau mérite! La femme est *naturelle*, c'est à dire abominable' (Baudelaire 2001, p. 5).

[82] Baudelaire 1908, p. 88: 'Le chameau de Cazotte, chameu, diable et femme'.

[83] Baudelaire 1961, p. 143: 'Les anges impuissants se damneraient pour moi!'

[84] Ibid., p. 50.

[85] Ibid., p. 111: 'La reine de mon cœur au regard nonpareil, / Qui riait avec eux de ma sombre détresse / Et leur versait parfois quelque sale caresse'.

[86] Huysmans 2009, pp. 20–21.

[87] Ibid., p. 8. Original: 'la bêtise innée des femmes' (Huysmans 1977, p. 84). When des Esseintes later fulminates to himself about the insights of 'exceptional minds, of lofty souls', a similar misogynist phrasing appears (Huysmans 2009, p. 70). Original: 'des intelligences choises, des âmes élevées'; 'la sottise innée des femmes' (Huysmans 1977, p. 180). Further, women authors are derided as being without talent by des Esseintes (Huysmans 2009, pp. 120–121; Huysmans 1977, pp. 257–258).

[88] Quoted in Pierrot 1981, p. 128. Moreau can be said to be part of the Decadent canon, not least through the incorporation of his work into such a context by writers like Huysmans. It is also possible to argue that his style and choice of motifs in many ways fit well with my delineation of Decadence.

[89] Kubin's drawing can be considered simply a more provocative version of Rops's *Satan semant l'ivraie* (1882, see figure 7.12 in this chapter), which it closely resembles.

[90] Dowling 1979, pp. 435–436, 441.

[91] Felski 1991, p. 1099.

[92] Huysmans 2009, p. 86. Original: 'lui-même se féminisait' (Huysmans 1977, p. 207). Moore 1889/1972, p. 76.

[93] Quoted in Spackman 1998, p. 819.

[94] Quoted in Constable, Potolsky, & Denisoff 1999, p. 8.

[95] Felski 1991, pp. 1094–1095.

[96] Dowling 1979, pp. 444, 446. Outside of Great Britain, a view of the New Woman as "decadent" can be found, for example, in the writings of Laura Marholm (who we have already encountered in chapter 6), who describes her as 'a sign of decay and corruption' and claims that the countries where she has left the strongest stamp now clearly display 'the decline of a race' (p. 447).

[97] On Rachilde, see also chapter 5.

[98] Birkett 1986, p. 159.

[99] Ibid., p. 160.

[100] Quoted in ibid., p. 160. Dijkstra dismisses the notion that Rachilde's work was subversive in any way and reads it as an expression of self-hatred (Dijkstra 1986, pp. 337–340).

[101] Birkett 1986, p. 162.

[102] Hustvedt 1998, p. 25.

[103] For a sampling of such prose, see the 1993 anthology *Daughters of Decadence*, edited by Elaine Showalter. Not all texts in the book would really qualify as Decadent if compared to the set of family resemblances I have proposed, however. Many of them are better described as New Woman pieces. The title is thus slightly misleading, although there are several clear examples of Decadence in the volume, for instance Kate Chopin's 'An Egyptian Cigarette' (1900) and Charlotte Mew's 'A White Night' (1903). Other anglophone women writers heavily influenced by Decadence include Vernon Lee (Violet Page, 1856–1935), a lesbian feminist who often treated femme fatale motifs (in chapter 8 we will explore the connection between lesbian poets, feminism, and Decadence). In Sweden, Stella Kleve's (Mathilda Malling, 1864–1942) early work displayed Decadent traits (see Ney 1993, pp. 163–176). On female Decadents, see also Constable, Potolsky, & Denisoff 1999, pp. 6–7.

[104] Watson 1912, p. 168.

[105] Felski 1991, p. 1099.

[106] Ibid., p. 1104.

[107] Felski 1992, p. 357.

[108] A fine attempt at such an overview is Praz 1933/1960, pp. 215–372, 383–392, 403–411.

[109] Braddon [1862]/1998, pp. 70–71, my italics.

[110] Rossetti also produced several other versions of this painting, for example, a watercolour and gouache on paper (1867).

[111] Rossetti 2003, pp. 161–162. The lines in question are inspired by the episode in Goethe's *Faust* (in Keats's translation) where Lilith appears and the protagonist is warned of her strangling hair.

[112] Rossetti 2007, p. 182, Rossetti's italics. We can note that this is confirmed by the fact that the candle holder in the picture is distinctly nineteenth century.

[113] Rossetti 2003, p. 43.

[114] Zasempa 2008, p. 57.

[115] Ibid., p. 59.

[116] Rossetti 2007, p. 182.

[117] Hugo 1972, pp. 281, 286.

[118] Gourmont [1892]/1925, p. 66: 'Oui, tels devaient être nos premieres baisers, à nous! Nous avons pour jamais faussé l'amour! Nous lui avons mis la tête en bas! Femelle, je t'adore!'

[119] Ibid., pp. 66–70.

[120] Ibid., p. 69: 'Ne suis-je pas l'Inféconde?'

[121] Ibid., pp. 95–100.

[122] Ibid., p. 117: 'O mon petit Satan, merci, je t'aime!'

[123] Ibid., pp. 119–121.

[124] Ibid., pp. 133–134: ‘car si avec la Science ils avaient conquis la Vie, que serais-je, moi? Un Dieu parmi les dieux, et peut-être pas le premier.’

[125] Ibid., pp. 135–141.

[126] Ibid., pp. 146–147. Adam’s anger turns out to be somewhat hasty, as God sends an angel to tell man of the second paradise that will arise through the coming of Christ—the punishment being heaped on the head of man is not eternal.

[127] Lorrain 1897, p. 57: ‘Dieu, je bénis mon crime et ma stérilité.’

[128] Sacher-Masoch 2003, p. 37: ‘dämonisch’; p. 151: ‘dieses dämonische Haar’.

[129] Ibid., p. 46: ‘Teuflisch holdes Mythenweib’.

[130] Ibid., p. 70: ‘können Sie nicht ein braves, treues Weib sein, so seien Sie ein Teufel’.

[131] Ibid., p. 85: ‘dämonische Größe’; p. 108: ‘[m]ein schöner Teufel’.

[132] Ibid., p. 116: ‘ihr teuflisches Gelächter’; p. 137: ‘eine jener neronischen Naturen, welche einen teuflischen Genuß darin finden’.

[133] Ibid., p. 76: ‘ergreift eine teuflische Neugier’; p. 146: ‘eine diabolische Freude’; p. 190: ‘mit satanischem Hohne’.

[134] Ibid., p. 140: ‘Sie gefällt dir am Ende besser wie ich, sie ist noch dämonischer.’

[135] Ibid., p. 153: ‘diabolisches Antlitz’; p. 157: ‘sie ist eine Teufelin’.

[136] Ibid., p. 61: ‘Hinter dem großen grünen Ofen konnte jeden Augenblick Mephistopheles als fahrender Scholast hervortreten.’

[137] Ibid., pp. 100, 27.

[138] Ibid., p. 108: ‘Ich habe das Gefühl, als wäre ich verkauft oder hätte meine Seele dem Teufel verschreiben.’

[139] Ibid., p. 66: ‘alle Poesie, wie alles Dämonische im weibe konzentrierte’.

[140] Ibid., p. 196: ‘Daß das Weib, wie es die Natur geschaffen und wie es der Mann gegenwärtig heranzieht, sein Feind ist und nur seine Sklavin oder seine Despotin sein kann, nie aber seine Gefährtin. Dies wird sie erst dann sein können, wenn sie ihm gleich steht an Rechten, wenn sie ihm ebenbürtig ist durch Bildung und Arbeit.’

[141] d’Aurevilly [1874]/2003: ‘pourquoi ne seraient-elles pas les *Diaboliques*? N’ont-elles pas assez de diabolisme en leur personne pour-mériter ce doux nom?’; ‘des histoires réelles de ce temps de progrès et d’une civilisation si délicieuse et si *divine*, que, quand on s’avise de les écrire, il semble toujours que soit le Diable qui ait dicté!’ As mentioned earlier, the women are, however, never literally (only, occasionally, in passing use of various figures of speech) connected to Satan in the tales themselves.

[142] Lombroso & Ferrero 1895, p. 151.

[143] Wratislaw 1994, p. 32.

[144] Ibid., p. 11.

[145] Swinburne 2000, p. 131.

[146] Ibid., p. 126.

147 Ibid., p. 134.

148 Ibid., p. 122.

149 Ibid., pp. 126, 136.

150 Körner 2000, p. 157. Somewhat deflating the temple-like appearance of this arrangement, however, von Stuck in fact used the structure to conceal a changing-room for models (ibid.). On von Stuck's home, see the opulent book about it produced by the Museum Villa Stuck (Danzker 2006), on the altar to sin, especially pp. 40, 44, 74–81, 86–91.

151 On Munch's many depictions of femmes fatales, and their direct relation to Decadence and possibly also esotericism, see Faxneld 2011a.

152 The essay was first published in *Fortnightly Review* in November 1869, and then later included in the book *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873).

153 Pater 1998, p. 80, my italics.

154 Ibid., p. 80. On the esoterization and demonization of *La Gioconda*, see Faxneld 2016.

155 Dijkstra 1986, p. 272.

156 Hustvedt 1998, pp. 19–20.

157 Brison 1969, pp. 7–9; Bade 2003, p. 22; Arwas 1972, p. 1.

158 Praz 1933/1960, p. 403.

159 On Rops's relation to Baudelaire, see Bade 2003, p. 41; Brison 1969, p. 17; Hoffmann 1981, pp. 213–214, 217; Menon 2006, p. 148.

160 Wilson 1975, p. 179.

161 Bade 2003, p. 41; Brison 1969, p. 14; Arwas 1972, p. 4.

162 Caume 1898.

163 Bonnier & Leblanc 1997, p. 19; Bade 2003, p. 6; Brison 1969, p. 25.

164 Huysmans [1889]/1908, pp. 117–118: 'célébré, non la femme contemporaine, non la Parisienne, dont les grâces minaudières … mais la Femme essentielle et hors des temps, la Bête vénéneuse et nue, la mercenaire des Ténèbres, la serve absolue du Diable'.

165 On Rops's depictions of such women from the countryside he grew up in, see Hoffmann 1984, pp. 264–265.

166 Menon 2006, pp. 25–27. A variant of the more daring first version can be seen in Védrine 2003, p. 67.

167 *Les Sataniques* is a difficult term to translate and also carries connotations of demonic possession.

168 Bonnier & Leblanc 1997, p. 88.

169 Bonnier & Leblanc (1997, p. 88) interpret the female Satan entwined around the tree as a siren, but it is clearly an art historical reference of a different kind.

170 Brison 1969, pp. 10, 20.

171 Quoted in Bade 2003, p. 86.

172 Other important contributions to the building of the virtual cathedral came from the polemics between esotericists condemning one another as Satanists (with both sides considering themselves

the representatives of light and goodness) and Léo Taxil's conspiracy theory hoax centred on Satanism. The best recent discussion of these matters is Luijk 2013, pp. 241–323.

173 Banks 1990, p. 151.

174 Huysmans [1889]/1908, p. 98: 'le grand vase des iniquités et des crimes, le charnier des misères et des hontes, la véritable introductrice des ambassades déléguées dans nos âmes par tous les vices'.

175 Quoted in Pincus-Witten 1976, pp. 57–58.

176 Brison 1969, pp. 12, 19; Bade 2003, pp. 30, 33, 37; Revens 1975, p. 9; Hoffmann 1984, p. 262.

177 Quoted in Brison 1969, p. 46.

178 Quoted in Bonnier & Leblanc 1997, p. 17. Original: 'Je suis né comprenant tout ce qui touche puissament aux vieux cultes païens. … Tout ce qui effraie les hommes dans leurs petits appétits physiques, peureux des caresses innommées, m'a d'enfance paru simple, naturel, et beau. Un homme donnant au corps de sa maîtresse toutes les ivresses que sa bouche peut inventer, deux femmes se couvrant de baisers, m'ont toujours paru les plus belles choses du monde à célébrer par la plume ou par le crayon. D'où la haine des sots et cet art que personne n'a osé faire avec moi' (p. 5).

179 Arwas 2002, p. 181.

180 If that is indeed what this phrase indicates. It could also mean that the figure in the image does her deeds for this purpose.

181 Quoted in Bonnier & Leblanc 1997, p. 84. Original: 'Voici à peu près ce que je voulais faire dire au bon Antoine, par Satan (un Satan en habit noir, un Satan moderne représentant l'Esprit éternellement lutteur): Je veux te montrer que tue es fou, mon brave Antoine, en adorant tes abstractions! … Mais si les Dieux sont partis, la Femme te reste et avec l'amour de la Femme l'amour fécondant de la vie. Voila à peru près ce que disait mon Satan; malheureusement, un Satan en habit noir eût encore moins été compris et j'ai dû le remplacer par un Satan de fantaisie, ce qui est plus banal.'

182 Ibid., p. 84.

183 Baldick 1955, p. 166.

184 Beaumont 1989, p. 110.

185 Ibid., p. 111.

186 Ibid., p. 110.

187 Ziegler 2004, p. 213.

188 Baldick 1955, p. 149. The letter can be found in Beaumont 1989, p. 101.

189 Brandreth 1963, pp. 80–81. Quote on p. 81. Cf. Laver 1954, p. 120.

190 For a discussion of this situation, see Faxneld 2006a, pp. 129–130; Luijk 2013, pp. 188–240.

191 I have treated this debate considerably more in-depth in Faxneld 2006a, pp. 126–134. Cf. the precise scrutiny of the evidence in Luijk 2013, pp. 188–225, which reaches essentially the same conclusion (but, unlike me in this case, also musters a great deal of evidence from unpublished primary sources in support of it).

192 Cf. Baldick 1955, pp. 143–144.

193 Huysmans 2001, pp. 6–7.

194 Ibid., p. 8 (I quote from the English translation by Terry Hale). Original: 'l'ignominieux spectacle de cette fin de siècle' (Huysmans 1891, p. 6).

[195] Huysmans 2001, p. 7.

[196] Ibid., pp. 103–104.

[197] E.g. ibid., pp. 202–203.

[198] Huysmans 2009, p. 132. Original: 'célébrait … sur le dos d'une femme, à quattre pattes, dont la croupe nue et constamment souillée servait d'autel et que les assistants communiaient, par dérision, avec une hostie noire dans la pâte de laquelle une image de bouc était emprinte' (Huysmans 1977, pp. 273–274).

[199] Huysmans 2009, p. 27; Huysmans 1977, pp. 115–116.

[200] Huysmans 2009, p. 46. Original: 'la déité symbolique de l'indestructible Luxure, la déesse de l'immortelle Hystérie, la Beauté maudite' (Huysmans 1977, pp. 144–145). An extended nightmare vision of Syphilis incarnate as a woman also reflects this fascination (at least in the author; even if this is a most disagreeable experience for the protagonist, Huysmans wallows in it with great enthusiasm). Huysmans 2009, pp. 78–81; Huysmans 1977, pp. 195–199.

[201] Huysmans 2001, p. 42. Original: 'le Des Esseintes du quinzième siècle' (Huysmans 1891, p. 48).

[202] Huysmans 2001, p. 45. Original: 'Mysticisme exalté'; 'Satanisme exaspéré' (Huysmans 1891, p. 51).

[203] Huysmans 2001, p. 56; Huysmans 1891, p. 65.

[204] Huysmans 2001 pp. 57–58; Huysmans 1891, pp. 66–67.

[205] Huysmans 2001, p. 91. Original: 'de salonnière prudente et réservée'; 'de folle passionnée, de romantique aiguë, d'hystérique de corps, de nymphomane d'âme' (Huysmans 1891, p. 105).

[206] Huysmans 2001, p. 137; Huysmans 1891, p. 158.

[207] Huysmans 2001, p. 161. Original: 'serrait une morte' (Huysmans 1891, p. 186).

[208] Huysmans 2001, pp. 134–137. Quote on p. 134. Original: 'un monstre d'égoïsme' (Huysmans 1891, p. 155).

[209] Huysmans 2001, p. 183; Huysmans 1891, p. 211.

[210] Huysmans 2001, p. 163. Original: 'tous ces cahots de femmes, réunies en une seule' (Huysmans 1891, p. 188).

[211] Huysmans 2001, p. 188. Original: 'complètement changée d'allures et de voix, une fille, crachant de la boue, perdant toute vergogne'; 'une impitoyable mâtine, une femme vraiment satanique, vraiment rosse' (Huysmans 1891, p. 217).

[212] Huysmans 2001, pp. 229–230; Huysmans 1891, pp. 264–266.

[213] Birkett 1986, p. 89.

[214] Huysmans 2001, p. 76. Original: 'les souvenirs féminins de sa jeunesse'; 'les mensonges, les carottes et les cocuages, l'impitoyable saleté d'âme des femmes encore jeunes' (Huysmans 1891, p. 88).

[215] Huysmans 2001, p. 196. Original: 'petite oie' (Huysmans 1891, p. 226).

[216] Huysmans 2001, p. 221. Original: 'tombé dans un repaire de sodomites' (Huysmans 1891, p. 256).

[217] Huysmans 2001, p. 222. Original: 'il y avait très peu d'hommes et beaucoup de femmes' (Huysmans 1891, p. 256).

[218] Huysmans 2001, p. 227. Original: 'des femmes tombées sur les tapis se roulèrent. L'une sembla mue par un ressort, se jeta sur le ventre et rama l'air avec ses pieds; une autre, subitement atteinte d'un strabisme hideux, gloussa, puis, devenue aphone, resta, la mâchoire ouverte, la langue retroussée, la pointe dans le palais, en haut; un autre, bouffie, livide, les pupilles dilatées, se renversa la tête sur les épaules puis la redressa d'un jet brusque, et se laboura en râclant la gorge avec ses ongles; une autre encore, étendue sur les reins, défit ses jupes, sortit une panse nue, météorisée, énorme, puis se tordit en d'affreuses grimaces, tira, sans pouvoir la rentrer, une langue blance déchirée sur les bords, d'une bouche en sang, hersée de dents rouges' (Huysmans 1891, p. 262).

[219] Huysmans 2001, pp. 227, 228. Original: 'hystérie'; 'cabanon exaspéré d'hospice' (Huysmans 1891, p. 263).

[220] Huysmans 2001, p. 231. Original: 'connus dans les hospices' (Huysmans 1891, p. 268).

[221] Quoted in Laver 1954, p. 124. The tale of Huysmans's involvement with Boullan, and the resulting conflicts with Parisian esotericists (where accusations of sinister spiritual practices were flung back and forth, a friend of Huysmans was forced to fight a duel with sharp blades, Huysmans believed he was being attacked by occult forces, and much else) is entertaining enough (see Luijk 2013, pp. 232–240), but will not be recounted here, since it is of little relevance to the specific topic at hand.

[222] Hustvedt 1998, p. 16.

[223] Linton 1883, pp. 64–65.

[224] Huysmans 2001, p. 218. Original: 'les affiliés du Satanisme sont des mystiques d'un ordre immonde, mais ce sont des mystiques. Maintenant, il est fort probable que leurs élans vers l'au-delà du Mal coïncident avec des tribulations enragées des sens, car la Luxure est la goutte-mère du Demonisme' (Huysmans 1891, p. 251).

[225] Huysmans 2001, p. 127. Original: 'une femme est-elle possédée parce qu'elle est hystérique, ou est-elle hystérique parce qu'elle est possédée?'; 'L'Église seule peut répondre, la science pas' (Huysmans 1891, p. 147).

[226] Huysmans 2001, p. 206. Original: 'les efforts de la science moderne ne font que confirmer les découvertes de la magie d'antan' (Huysmans 1891, p. 238).

[227] Huysmans 2001, p. 225. Original: 'Soutien du Pauvre exaspéré, Cordial des vaincus, c'est toi qui les doues de l'hypocrisie, de l'ingratitude, de l'orgueil, afin qu'ils se puissent défendre contre les attaques des enfants de Dieu, des Riches!' (Huysmans 1891, p. 260).

[228] Huysmans 2001, p. 225. Original: 'Dieu logique' (Huysmans 1891, p. 260). A letter he wrote while working on *Là-bas* also exemplifies this attitude, straight from the mouth of the author rather than his fictional alter ego. Concerning his former mentor Zola, he says: 'He believes in positivism and materialism, in what is modern, and I have had enough of all that' (Beaumont 1989, p. 100).

[229] Huysmans 2001, p. 225. Original: 'amours stériles et réprovées' (Huysmans 1891, p. 260).

[230] Huysmans 2001, p. 226. Original: 'Tu as oublié cette Pauvreté que tu prêchais, Vassal énamouré des Banques!' (Huysmans 1891, p. 261).

[231] Huysmans 2001 p. 13; Huysmans 1891, p. 13. For a further example of Durtal's aversion towards capitalism and big finance, see e.g. Huysmans 2001, p. 244; Huysmans 1891, p. 283.

[232] Huysmans 2001, pp. 17–18; Huysmans 1891, pp. 19–20.

[233] Sade 2006, p. 134.

[234] Huysmans 2009, p. 132. On Huysmans's reading of Sade, see Pierrot 1981, p. 140.

[235] Birkett 1986, p. 86.

[236] Waite 1896/2003, p. 14.

[237] Lowrie 1974, pp. 104, 135.

[238] Gourmont 1894, p. 17: 'Kabbaliste et occultiste, instruite en l'histoire des religions et des philosophies asiatiques, attirée par le charme des symboles, fascinée par le voile d'Isis, initiée, par de dangereuses et personnelles expériences, aux plus redoutables merveilles de la Magie noire.'

[239] The motif of Isis's veil was prominent even outside of Theosophy, so this phrasing by Gourmont is a highly uncertain indication.

[240] Laver 1954, p. 120; Banks 1990, p. 170. On Courrière's mental problems, see also the curious tale recounted by Baldick (1955, p. 151).

[241] Quoted in Baldick 1955, p. 138.

[242] Ibid., p. 138.

[243] Banks 1990,/ p. 170.

[244] Ibid., p. 260. Sand was a bestselling author, who was read by 'everyone'. Even if Courrière's admiration was uncommonly great, it is not necessarily highly significant in terms of sympathy for the Devil.

[245] Baldick 1955, p. 138; Laver 1954, p. 120. Cf., however, Luijk 2013, p. 214, n. 1056.

[246] Baldick 1955, p. 138.

[247] Ibid., p. 139.

[248] Ibid., p. 142.

[249] Lowrie 1974, p. 107; Lloyd 1990, p. 15.

[250] Baldick 1955, p. 139.

[251] Banks 1990, p. 170.

[252] Baldick 1955, p. 164; Banks 1990, p. 113. In spite of Jacquemin's works being fully in line with those exhibited at the Salon de la Rose+Croix, she was never allowed to participate since a 'magical rule' forbade female contributors (Pincus-Witten 1976, pp. 49–51). A translation of these rules in their entirety are to be found in Appendix II in Pincus-Witten's book (pp. 211–216).

[253] Lorrain [1910], pp. 125–126: 'Mme Chantelouve! Personne n'ignore, dans le monde artiste, que le livre de M. Huysmans est à clef … . Mme Chantelouve! Le succès du volume fut tel que toutes voulurent s'y reconnaître. Il n'y eut pas de brasserie, à Monmartre, et d'atelier, à Montparnasse, où un petit modèle aux yeux agrandis de morphine et d'éther ne se dressât, au seul nom de Huysmans, pour s'écrier: "Son héroïne, c'est moi!" Il y eut affluence de madames Chantelouve sur le marché. L'une avait le teint pâle et les cheveux châtain-roux de la dame; l'autre réclamait comme sienne l'eau dolente et grise, subitement alumée de paillettes d'or, de ses étranges yeux vert; celle-ci, enfin, revendiquait pour elle la froideur inusitée, dans l'amour, de sa chair hystérique.'

[254] Huysmans 2001, pp. 182–183. Original: 'vous restreignez singulièrement le rôle d'un mari, dans un ménage'; 'Je sais que ces idées ne sont pas celles du monde où je vis, et elles ne paraissent pas non plus être les vôtres … mais j'ai une volonté de fer, et je ploie ceux qui m'aiment' (Huysmans 1891, pp. 210–211).

[255] Huysmans 2001, p. 225. Original: 'tu sauves l'honneur des familles par l'avortement des ventres fécondés dans des oublis de bonnes crises, tu insinues la hâte des fausses couches aux mères'

(Huysmans 1891, p. 260).

256 For a general discussion of abortion and contraception in the late nineteenth century, see Knibiehler 1993/1995, pp. 343–347.

257 Evans 1991, p. 18.

258 Ibid.

259 Gluck 2005, pp. 146–148; quote on p. 148.

260 Wilde 1966, p. 982. The description is found in Wilde's essay 'The Decay of Lying: An Observation', first published as an article in 1889, and then reworked and included in the collection of essays *Intentions* (1891). The essay is an ironic conversation between the characters Vivian and Cyril, but the phenomenon Wilde describes might be presumed to be real in spite of the partly satirical nature of the text (there is, however, some ambiguity as to whether the women are actively appropriating these roles, or if life, in an unclear way, automatically imitates art). He also relates how young boys embark on mild acts of criminality after reading about the adventures of highwayman Dick Turpin.

261 Hustvedt 1998, p. 13. In the preface to the first edition of the novel, Moore makes it clear that it is an autobiographical book (Moore 1889/1972, p. 35).

262 I have presented this argument in more detail elsewhere, i.e. Faxneld 2006, pp. 140–149, 217; Faxneld 2012h.

263 Jaworska 1995, pp. 13–15.

264 Tadeusz Zelenski quoted in Krakowski 1999, p. 75.

265 Zelenski quoted in Klim 1992, p. 32.

266 Quoted in Kossowski 1995, p. 70, my italics.

267 Kugel 1992, pp. 146–148. The Przybyszewski book he drew on was *Die Synagoge des Satan*.

268 Faxneld 2006a, pp. 185–186.

269 Ruben van Luijk has proposed that the influence from Michelet was mediated via Jules Bois's book *Le Satanisme et la magie* (1895), which seems plausible, though Przybyszewski may, as van Luijk concedes, have read both (Luijk 2013, p. 331).

270 Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 6, p. 46.

271 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 51: 'Seid arm am Geiste und demütig, seid gehorsam, ahm nach, denkt nicht!'

272 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 55: 'stolzes Sündigen im Names des Satan-Instinktes, oder Satan-Natur, Satan-Neugierde und Satan-Leidenschaft'.

273 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 73: 'der Vater des Lebens, der Fortpflanzung, der Entwicklung und der ewigen Wiederkunft'; 'die Negation des Lebens, denn alles Leben ist Böse'.

274 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 39: 'der erste Philosoph'; 'der erste Anarchist'.

275 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 37.

276 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 57: 'ein unreines Tier, eine Schlange des Satans'.

277 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 76: 'das ewige Prinzip des Bösen, die Stifterin des Verbrechens, den Sauerteig des Lebens'.

278 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 76: 'Popularisierung und Bestätigung seines Kultus'.

279 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 77: 'wie zwei Mehlsäcke bis auf den Magen herunterängen'.

[280] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 91.

[281] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 81: 'eine ektstatische Wollust, Schmerzen zu verursachen'; 'wenn sie mit gierigen flackernden Händen in den Eingeweiden des gemordeten Kindes wühlt'.

[282] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 85: 'nymphomanische Furie'; 'Schmutz und Ekel zur Wollust wird'.

[283] Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 85–86: 'weiche Haupt zwischen ihren Schenkeln und preßt es gewaltsam in ihre Genitalien hinein mit den Worten: Gehe hinein woher Du gekommen bist!'

[284] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 96: 'Alle bürgerlichen und göttlichen Gesetze kehren sich von selbst in ihrem Gehirne um, und von selbst entsteht der fürchterliche satanische Kodex. Den Satan sollst Du lieben, ihn als Gott verehren, und keinen außer ihm. Den Namen Jesu sollst Du verachten und beschmutzen. Die heiligen Tage der Synagoge sollst Du in Ehren halten, den Vater und die Mutter hassen. Du sollst töten Männer, Frauen und vor allen Dingen die Kinder, denn damit kränkst Du am tiefsten jenen, der da gesagt hat: Lasset die Kindlein zu mir kommen. Du sollst die Ehe brechen, Unzucht jeder Art betrieben, am liebsten wider die Natur, Du sollst rauben, morden und vernichten, Du sollst falsch schwören und falsches Zeugnis abgeben.'

[285] One possibility would be to read the demonizing passages as symbolic, with for example the murder of children standing for a refusal of motherhood. Appealing though such a solution might seem, there is no real support for it in the text.

[286] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 30: 'das Weib ist das Übel, die Leidenschaft, die Unruhe, die Mutter der Häresie, die Hexe und der Sabbath, das Weib ist der Satan selbst!'

[287] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 31: 'Der Satan der Hysterie und der Langweile triumphiert über das Weib', 'Neue Satanskirchen sind entstanden: die Moulin Rouges, die Orpheums, die Blumensäle'.

[288] Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 31–32: 'Der phantastische Tanz der mittelalterlichen Hexen wurde durch den modernen Cancan abgelöst, das giftige Aphrodisiakum der Hexe wich der Morphinspritze, aber die Grundstimmung verbleib, der Wille zum verbrechen und zum Gottesraub, der Wille zu einer übermenschlichen Geschlechtssteigerung, die sich nur in der Perversität austoben kann.'

[289] Ibid., vol. 7, p. 139.

[290] Quoted in Cavanaugh 2000, p. 46.

[291] For instance, a woman is described as a vampire in *Androgyne*, and the protagonist's former mistresses are portrayed as various animals (Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 1, pp. 114, 116). In 'In hac lacrymarum valle' ('In This Valley of Tears', 1896), a woman kills her lover slowly and cruelly using her hairpins (Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 2, p. 35).

[292] Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 6, p. 32: 'Der tiefste Geschlechtspsychologe des Jahrhunderts'.

[293] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 22: 'Das Weib eines Félicien Rops ist das Weib, das außerhalb jeder Zufälligkeit und jeder Zeit steht, der archetypus des Weibes, Hekate, Medea; ebensogut das Weib der Apokalypse wie das des Verbrechens; das Weib, das einstmals Priesterweihen empfing und das dem Teufel den Hintern küßte; das Weib, das die Menschheit durch die Manneskraft erlöst, und das dieselbe Menschheit in Ekel, Schmutz und Fäulnis hinabzerrt.'

[294] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 23: 'seine Radierungen sind ein mächtiges, philosophisches System'; 'hat die Psychologie des Weibes erschöpft mit einer Kühnheit und einer Tiefe, wogegen die kranke Misogynie eines Strindberg sich nur wie die Rachsucht geschlechtlicher Unbefriedigung ausnimmt'.

[295] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 32: 'Das Weib eines Rops wird in der Wirbel hineingezogen, sie schreit, sie jauchzt, sie leidet mit, das Blut überströmt ihr Gehirn, bis sie alles um ich herum vergißt und sich dem "Influx"

ihres Gebieters, des Satans, hingibt: sie ist immer eine Art satanisierte heilige Theresa.’

296 Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 92–93.

297 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 104: ‘hysterische Weiber mit somnambulen Anlagen’.

298 Lombroso 1891, pp. v–xi.

It is our fiction that validates us.

MONIQUE WITTIG, *Le Corps lesbien* ('The Lesbian Body', 1973)[1]

8

Lucifer and the Lesbians

SAPPHIC SATANISM

INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at how lesbianism was connected to Satanism in fin-de-siècle discourses, and how a lesbian poetess could turn the tables and use this association as part of a subversive feminist strategy. The main focus is France, but German and British examples will also be discussed. First, a cursory genealogy of the linking of Sapphic love and Satan will be outlined. Then, an important transitional text between outright condemnation and embrace of this combination as something positive, Catulle Mendès's *Méphistophéla* (1890), will be analysed in some detail. Finally, in the main section of the chapter, the explicit Sapphic Satanism of poetess Renée Vivien will be examined. Along with her, a German example of a poetess—Marie Madeleine, the baroness von Puttkamer—adopting an identity as a demonic lesbian in her writings is also considered briefly.

HECATE, NUNS, AND DIABOLICAL PORNOGRAPHY: LESBIANISM AS A (SATANIC) CULT

A vast array of texts about lesbianism was produced in late nineteenth-century Europe. They encompassed a variety of different fields, such as medicine, criminology, journalism, prose fiction (ranging from pornography to serious

art) and poetry. The authors were nearly always men, and as a rule they set out to denounce or suggest measures to curb this 'vice' or 'pathological condition'. Exceptions from such negative attitudes are mostly to be found in the realm of fiction. Around 1870 there occurred an explosion of scientific as well as fictional writing about lesbianism. Concern about this 'problem' was expressed primarily in France and Germany, with one of the first pivotal works being a small but influential case study by German psychiatrist Carl von Westphal (1833–1890), which affected not only medical professionals but also fiction writers. This wave of medical and public interest was preceded by a number of avant-garde poets treating the theme in the 1850s. Foremost among them was Baudelaire.[2] We shall return to Baudelaire and his colleagues, but first it is necessary to look at some earlier works that established two concepts that will be the focus of our interest here: the notion of lesbianism as a sort of religious cult and the link between the powers of darkness and homosexual women.

An early British example of both is William King's *The Toast* (1732, further editions in 1736 and 1754), which contains an attack on the Duchess of Newburgh, who owed him a large sum of money. King portrays her as a witch and a lesbian (and he actually uses this word in the same sense, denoting a sexual orientation, that it is used today) who worships the Greek goddess of witches, Hecate: 'Then by *Hecate* she swore, *she was sated with Men*; / Sung a wanton *Sapphoic*'.[3] Connecting witchcraft with homosexuality, male and female, was, of course, nothing new. Nor was it, however, as time-honoured as might be supposed. Surprisingly, most demonological tracts prior to the sixteenth century, including the *Malleus Maleficarum*, asserted that sodomy (female homosexuality was not acknowledged and on the agenda at the time) was so abhorrent that even Satan and his demons would not engage in it. Thomas Aquinas had viewed demons as creatures with no fixed gender, which could accordingly have sex with both men and women. This had some disturbing implications concerning gender as performative that later demonologists tried to circumvent.[4] For reasons quite external to theological debates, some of them, like Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533, not to be confused with his uncle the Hermetic philosopher), started to emphasize how the demons were prone to tempt men into 'sinning against nature' with them. At the end of the sixteenth century, and even more during the seventeenth, descriptions of witches' sabbaths as sexual orgies involving

same-sex relations (along with incest, bestiality, and other transgressive sexual acts) became a major motif in the literature.[5]

Returning to eighteenth-century Great Britain, we find, for example, a harshly anti-homosexual 1749 pamphlet by an anonymous author, where the title provides a clear indication of how this erotic disposition was rhetorically connected with the Devil: *Satan's Harvest Home: Or, the Present State of Whorecraft, Adultery, Fornication, Procuring, Pimping, Sodomy, and the Game at Flatts (Illustrated by an Authentick and Entertaining Story), and Other SATANIC WORKS Daily Propagated in This Good Protestant Kingdom*. The pamphlet is mainly devoted to attacking male homosexuals, but also includes condemnations of lesbianism, and blames Sappho for having devised a method ('the game at flatts') for women to achieve sexual pleasure unaided by men.[6] While this pamphlet did not hold back when handling the topic, British writers of prose fiction—in this century as in the next—would otherwise typically remain more demure and sedate in comparison to their occasionally shockingly explicit French colleagues.[7] English poetry could at times approach French luridness, with Swinburne, whom we shall discuss further on, as the prime example. The notion of homosexuality in general as Satanic, or at least unholy, was firmly established in Great Britain by the end of the nineteenth century, as is evident from the fact that reports in the London press concerning the trials of gay men almost always drew analogies to the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.[8]

The nation that contributed most to the stereotypes that would surround lesbians in the late nineteenth century was undoubtedly France. Aside from the long-standing demonization of lesbianism, there was a more general tendency, which was particularly prominent in France, to associate it with religion. At times, this led to characterizations of it as a sort of autonomous cult. It could also be depicted as closely connected to mainstream religion, which equally helped establish the idea of it having something to do with ritualistic practices. Denis Diderot's *La Religieuse* ('The Nun', published in 1796 but written in 1760) tells of homosexual relations between nuns, among other things, and has been said to present the first lesbian character in the history of the modern French novel.[9] It is worth mentioning here foremost because of its monastic setting, which strengthened associations between lesbianism and religion. This combination is also present in *La Nouvelle Sapho, ou Histoire de la Secte Anandryne* ('The New Sappho, or The Story of the Anandryne Sect', ca. 1784, probably written by Mathieu François Pidanzat de

Mairobert), where the heroine is initiated into a lesbian 'sect' in contemporary Paris after first being examined for physical signs of a homosexual disposition. Such signs are indeed found, and it is proclaimed that 'she has a diabolical clitoris; she will be better suited to women than to men'.[10] The sect in question has a temple where Sappho and her lovers are honoured, and comes across as a bizarre mix between sinister freemasonry and an antique mystery cult. The terminology they use has several examples of phrases and designations hinting at a Satanic dimension. For instance, the initiator and novice, both female, of course, are called an 'incubus' and a 'succubus', respectively (male and female sexual demons in Christian tradition).[11] While some have accepted this text as a factual account, it appears quite manifestly to be a work of fiction, even if some of the characters are possibly based on actual persons who may or may not have had homosexual inclinations. In the same time period, the infamous Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) unsurprisingly included lesbianism (or, rather, female bisexuality) among the many forms of transgressive sexuality delineated in his works. Although he did let one of his libertine heroines praise Lucifer during a sexual act (see chapter 7), he did not connect same-sex desire between women to Satan.

In 1833 a novella bearing the title *Gamiani, ou deux nuits d'excès* ('Gamiani, or Two Nights of Excess') was published in Brussels, where many French writers chose to have their less respectable works printed due to the greater leniency of Belgian censorship laws. The author was stated to be 'Alcide, Baron de M . . . ', one of the characters in the tale, and obviously a pseudonym. This highly erotic text became a classic of forbidden literature and went through numerous printings (forty by 1928), among others one illustrated by Félicien Rops. The three main characters are the innocent young Fanny B., the Baron Alcide, and the Countess Gamiani. The latter is a demonic lesbian, and contemporaries believed her to be a caricature of George Sand, while authorship of the novella was (and still remains) attributed to her former lover Alfred de Musset (1810–1857).[12]

Throughout the text, Countess Gamiani is consistently tied to the Devil. This is interesting in light of the sympathy for Satan evinced by Sand in *Consuelo* (as discussed in chapter 3). The diabolical connection is exhibited primarily on the level of language, in parables and descriptions. For example, Alcide thinks of Gamiani's 'satanic pleasures' in the arms of another woman and hides in her room to await 'the hour of the sabbath'—that is, lesbian

lovemaking.[13] Having been poisoned by Gamiani, Fanny calls her an 'accursed witch'.[14] Gamiani, speaking of her sexuality, explains about herself: 'I carry Hell within my soul, I have the fire in my body.'[15] When bound by a chambermaid, and thus unable to participate in the ensuing erotic debauchery, Gamiani is likened to a female Prometheus being tormented by vultures.[16] Prometheus, of course, was often merged with Satan in Romantic poetry (see chapter 3). At age fifteen, Gamiani was placed in a convent, where the nuns celebrated wild orgies. The prioress, whom Gamiani sees as 'Satan incarnate', symbolically gave herself to the Devil in her youth, by sexual intercourse with an orang-utan that she imagined was Lucifer himself.[17] The sexual pleasure experienced by the countess in the arms of one of her fellow nuns is described as 'the most accursed tribade any hell could have brought forth'.[18] Not only homosexual activity but also sexual excess in general is bound up with Satan. As a boy, Baron Alcide has a detailed hallucination of a bizarre orgy involving demons. This scene does not feature homosexuality, but did later probably inspire the equally phantasmagorical but misandric and lesbian Black Mass in Mendès's *Méphistophéla*.

It is always important to bear in mind the genre to which a text belongs. The close association between sexuality, especially lesbian sexuality, and Satan in a work of pornography like *Gamiani* must be seen differently than if the connection had been made, for example, in a sermon by a Catholic priest. Most readers of pornography are presumably enthusiastic about erotic pleasure, and the coding of it as Satanic can hence to a degree serve to make the demonic attractive and alluring instead of rendering the erotic frightening and off-putting. Granted, when it comes to female homosexuals *Gamiani* would simultaneously have strengthened cultural perceptions of them as frighteningly 'demonic' in some sense, but since heterosexual lasciviousness is just as implicated in the demonic realm this is to some extent counterbalanced. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that Gamiani is an evil and unsympathetic character, which certainly did the public image of lesbians no favours. Emma Donoghue sees the 'emphasis on the inherently terrible nature of lesbian sex', where 'it becomes a dark and almost supernatural force' as an innovation accomplished by Musset.[19] Yet, she underscores, the portrayal of the anti-heroine Gamiani is at the same time 'oddly glorifying', and in her unfaltering dedication to aberrant pleasures the Countess becomes 'a symbol of the defiance of nature that the decadent movement would

champion half a century later'.[20] I believe Donoghue makes an important point here, with implications for the whole Decadent fascination with female homosexuality.

EVIL FLOWERS AND SINISTER SAPPHOS

The same year that *Gamiani* was published, Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) made his contribution to the literature of lesbianism with the novel *La Fille aux yeux d'or* ('The Girl with the Golden Eyes'), and two years later it was followed by Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin, double amour* (1835). Balzac's lesbian is dominant and frightening, whereas Gautier's portrait (of a woman who is bisexual rather than strictly lesbian) is more sympathetic. Both novels were wildly popular and share the motif of androgyny, with initial confusion among the characters regarding the aberrant woman's actual gender identity.

While these were influential texts for the cultural history of female homosexuality, nothing can match the impact of the cycle of three lesbian poems in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). In 'Lesbos', the poet describes lesbianism as a 'religion' and a 'cult'. He defends the island where women love women, asking rhetorically 'Which of the gods would dare, Lesbos, be your judge'. Further, he declares about it: 'Your religion is noble like any other, / And love will laugh at Heaven and Hell!'[21] It is particularly interesting that he describes this sexual proclivity as a sort of cult, something that would facilitate the parallels later drawn between it and Devil-worshipping covens. The infamous panegyrics to Satan contained in the same volume would also indirectly have strengthened the notion of the two as somehow related. The other two lesbian-themed poems in *Les Fleurs du mal* differ strongly from the first, in firmly placing lesbian love in an actual or inner Hell. 'Femmes damnées: Delphine et Hippolyte' ('Damned women: Delphine and Hippolyte') is a dialogue between two female lovers, one of which feels tormented by the transgressiveness of their relationship. After her partner's contrasting of their gentle voluptuousness with the brutality of being made love to by a man she nonetheless decides to continue the liaison. The poetic voice then steps in and admonishes 'Descend, descend, lamentable victims, / Descend on the road to eternal Hell!'[22] The poem concludes with a description of the various sufferings awaiting them in Hell. In 'Femmes damnées' ('Damned women'), the poet addresses the lesbians as

Oh virgins, oh demons, oh monsters, oh martyrs,
Great spirits contemptuous of reality,
Seekers of the infinite, devotees and satyrs.

Here, too, Hell is their dwelling, though it would seem to be the more metaphorical Hell of their own inner anguish this time, and the poet adds a dimension of compassion and identification: 'You who my soul has followed to your Hell, / Poor sisters, I love you as much as I pity you'.[23]

Lilian Faderman succinctly puts the finger on the contradictions inherent in the poet's depiction of female homosexuals: 'Baudelaire attributes to them wild sexuality, which is a horror to the bourgeois Catholic side of him and a brave rebellion to the aesthete radical side of him.'[24] This doubleness in fact runs through the entire book, as discussed earlier, where Romantic Satanism in the English mould sits side by side with Catholic guilt and fear of damnation. At times, the two are mingled, and we have a 'new' form of Satanism, a Decadent variety that is only partly preoccupied with elevating Lucifer as a symbol of freedom and righteous rebellion against tyrants. Instead, it is just as engaged in an ambiguous wallowing in sinfulness, guilt, and aesthetic evil that would have been quite foreign to the Romantic Satanists (although this tendency is present to some degree even there, especially pertaining to the idea of evil as sublime). Baudelaire's treatment of the lesbian motif follows the same pattern.

Les Fleurs du mal had immense reverberations in French cultural life, not only among the nation's poets. It also occasioned some of the first non-pornographic visual depictions of lesbians. Explicitly inspired by Baudelaire, Gustave Courbet painted *Femmes damnées* ('Damned Women', 1864) and *Le Sommeil, ou Les Dormeuses* ('Sleep, or The Sleeping women', 1866), which were highly provocative in the eyes of his contemporaries.[25] Courbet's canvases contained no diabolical references, but other works of visual art contributed to the association between lesbianism and Satanism. For example, Georges de Feure's *La Voix du mal* ('The Voice of Evil', 1895), inspired by the poem 'La Voix' from *Les Fleurs du mal*, shows a female Satan or demoness (or possibly a satyr, it is not entirely clear) making love to a woman. In the foreground, a woman sits dreaming, seemingly immersed in forbidden fantasies of (demonic) lesbian love.[26] The same artist's *L'Esprit du mal* ('The Spirit of Evil', 1897–98) portrays two naked lesbians with a subterranean spirit, probably Satan, casting pleased glances at their activities

from his abode below the ground. He also produced an illustration (1897–98) to Baudelaire's 'Femmes damnées', which shows the Devil pulling a naked woman—presumably a lesbian—out of the interior of a flower (figure 8.1).[27] For an edition of Baudelaire's book published in 1900, Carlos Schwabe furnished several illustrations depicting demonic lesbians and women involved in sinister nocturnal rites or rebelling against God in Heaven above.[28]

FIGURE 8.1 Georges de Feure, *La femme damnée*, gouache on paper, 1897–1898, 34.5 × 25 cm, courtesy of the Arwas Archives. Part of a series of ten pictures inspired by Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, commissioned by Baron Vitta. Note the Devil pulling the woman up from the flower (a *fleur du mal*, presumably). The graveyard setting and skull on the ground may be a reference to the sterility of lesbian love that turn-of-the-century authors and artists were so fond of emphasizing.

Almost ten years after *Les Fleurs du mal* caused a scandal, England's equivalent of it was published, Algernon Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866). This volume, heavily influenced by Baudelaire, contains several poems dealing with lesbianism.[29] The general tone is hardly positive, and, for example, 'Sapphics' reads like a severe indictment of the songs sung by Sappho and her band of 'fruitless women', who drown out the pleas of a

weeping Aphrodite.[30] 'Faustine' establishes a very explicit connection between its title character, the demonic, and female homosexuality (figure 8.2). The Devil and God, we are told, threw dice for her soul,

> But this time Satan throve, no doubt;
> Long since, I ween,
> God's part in you was battered out.[31]

This demonization continues for ten stanzas, and we learn that Faustine was a suckling of Satan's breed ('one hard to ween', at that), and that even Christ would be powerless against her evil:

> Even he who cast seven devils out
> Of Magdalene
> Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
> For you Faustine.[32]

Further on in the poem her homosexuality comes into view:

> Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
> Through Mitylene
> Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
> By night, Faustine.
> The shameless nameless love that makes
> Hell's iron gin
> Shut on you like a trap that breaks
> The soul, Faustine.[33]

Swinburne then condemns the sterility of such love, rhyming 'sexless root' with 'kisses without fruit'.[34] Another poem, 'Anactoria', is a long monologue where Sappho addresses her female lover in sadistic, cannibalistic, and vampiric terms.[35] She also declares her hatred and defiance of God in a manner clearly echoing Shelley and Byron's portrayals of Satan the rebel agitator:

> Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
> Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
> Their lips who cried unto him?

. . .
Him I would reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
And mix his immortality with death.[36]

Lesbianism, then, is held up as a rebellion against God, but is hereby also aligned with the defiant misotheistic heroes of the previous generation of dissident English poets. Thus, an audience accustomed to the harsh words thrown at God by the Romantics may have perceived figures like Swinburne's sinister Sappho and Faustine as being cast in the mould of, for example, Shelley's heroic Cythna, Prometheus, or Wandering Jew. To an extent, this would have ennobled Swinburne's lesbians to his readers.

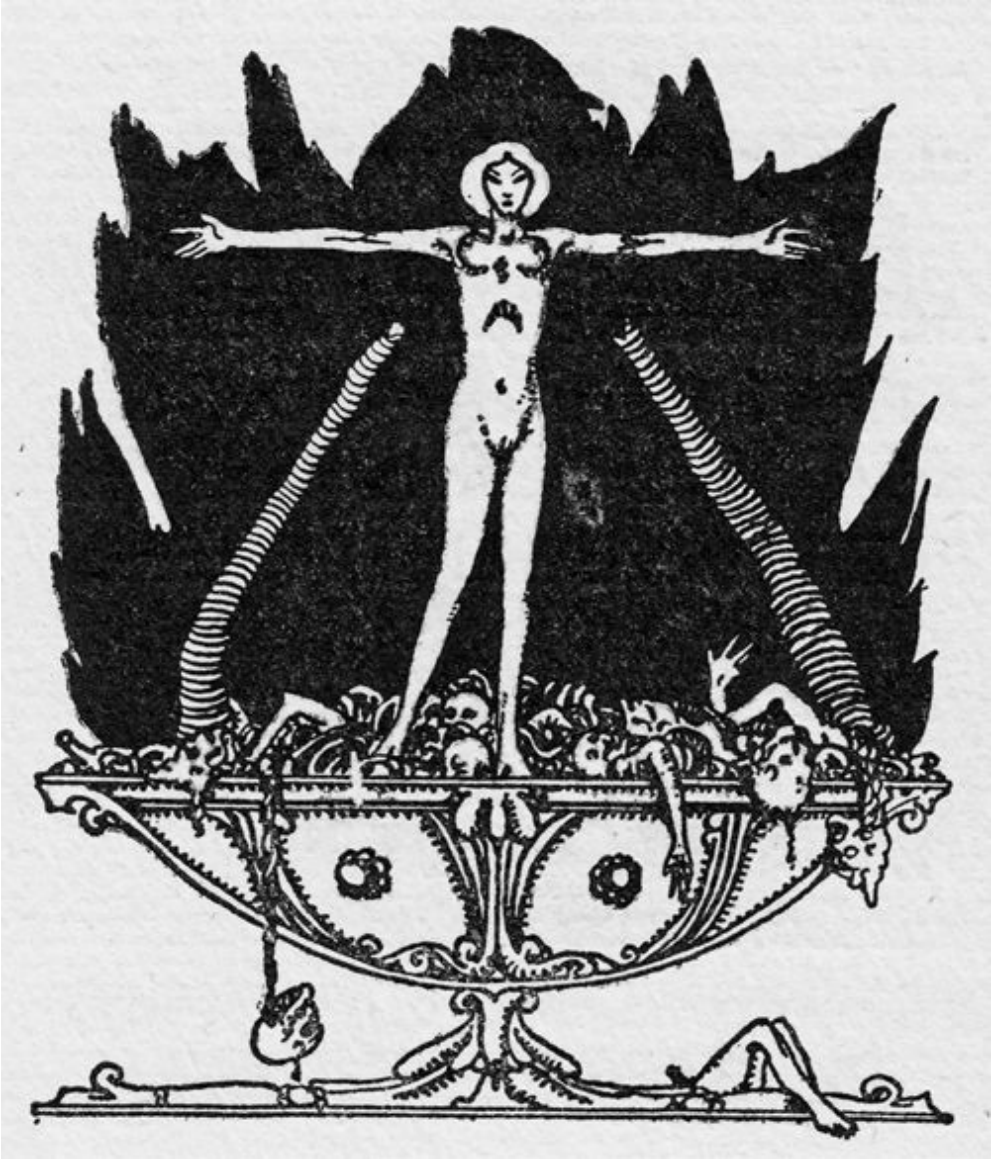

FIGURE 8.2 Illustration to ‘Faustine’ by Harry Clarke (1889–1931) for a 1928 edition of Swinburne’s *Selected Poems*.

A SODOMITE INTERLUDE: MALE HOMOSEXUALS AND SATANISM

Unsurprisingly, not only female homosexuality was brought together with Satanism, but male as well. As we have seen, male homosexuality is tied up with Devil worship in Huysmans’s *Là-bas* (1891), both in the subplot dealing with the bisexual rapist and child murderer Gilles de Rais and in the Black Mass visited by Durtal, the protagonist, where debauched Satanic choirboys have sexual intercourse with male members of the congregation. Indeed,

Durtal's first thought when entering the chapel where the mass is held is that he has 'stumbled into a lair of sodomites'.[37] Another, less direct, tie between Satanism and gay men could perhaps be called the Greek connection, as fauns, satyrs, and Pan were well-established as male homosexual icons.[38] There was, at the same time, a notable overlap in the iconography and visual presentation of these figures and Satan in the nineteenth century. To some extent, they also tended to be filled with a similar anti-Christian, pro-sensual ideological content. This overlap was often acknowledged (in the writings of Michelet, Przybyszewski, and many others) and taken as a sign they really did 'correspond' to one another, on an esoteric, psychological, or historical level.[39]

Demonic motifs could be used quite straightforwardly by poets writing about men loving men. Lionel Johnson's poem 'The Dark Angel' (1893) can be read as a rejection of (male) homosexuality, proclaiming it to be induced by Satan:

> Thou poisonest the fair design
> Of nature, with unfair device.
> . . .
> O banquet of a foul delight,
> Prepared by thee, dark Paraclete!'[40]

Johnson was a friend of Oscar Wilde and other prominent homosexuals, but later turned on them and eventually converted to Catholicism, which explains his demonization of his former associates.[41] Gay men could themselves use a similar terminology, as when Rimbaud referred to himself as 'the Infernal Bridegroom' when taking the active role in anal intercourse with fellow poet Verlaine.[42] Back on the other side of the English Channel, we find Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), a socialist and early gay rights activist who wrote the long poem 'The Secret of Time and Satan' (1888), where Satan is a sort of loving but initially harsh mystic initiator. The author expresses a homoerotic fascination with the sensual beauty of this figure.[43]

The most notorious instance of Satanism being aligned with gay sexuality is the scandal of millionaire nobleman Jacques d'Adelswärd Fersen's (1880–1923) 'Black Masses' in Paris, for which he was indicted and convicted to six months in prison in 1903. The Black Masses were *tableaux vivants* that Fersen organized for a select group of upper-class attendees and involved

some rather lurid situations featuring naked young boys.[44] The trial was highly publicized and strengthened the identification of homosexuality with diabolism that was already present. Of course, this already established supposed link was what would have made Fersen come up with these specific tableaux to begin with. In 1905, he published *Messes noires* ('Black Masses'), a satirical autobiographical novel about the scandal, which includes some striking passages of gay Satanism. One of the characters, a famous painter named Chignon, explains his definition of Satanism to the protagonist, the Decadent Lord Lyllian (the fictional version of Fersen himself, but of course not an exact portrait): 'Satan is man facing God. Satan is our nature, Satan is our sensual pleasure, Satan is our instinct. That is why, after all, Satan is not so wicked!' Among the earthly pleasures Chignon proposes should be celebrated is the joy of having 'a vigorous, handsome boy' cross one's path.[45] Lyllian is slightly disappointed by this vision of Satanism as 'the material cult of the self' and would have preferred something more romantic and bizarre. Chignon puts forward the idea that they should organize a Black Mass, but Lyllian sees it as an adoration of death that is foreign to him.[46] A while later, he decides to host such a ritual all the same, just as the author himself did. A sort of chapel is set up in his luxurious apartment, featuring flowers covering the floor, an altar with candles and censers, and naked young men or boys (figure 8.3). Lyllian himself, according to the testimony of his concierge, recites some sort of poetry while kneeling on furs and holding the smoking censer in front of an unclothed youngster 'covered with white roses and black lilies' and clutching a skull.[47] These activities seem to be a recurring phenomenon, with the same select group of schoolboys—whom Lyllian refers to as his 'choirboys'—as the objects of adoration.[48]

While neither Fersen himself nor his fictional alter ego Lord Lyllian can be said to display any serious interest in Satanism, their hedonistic revelling in diabolic ritual kinkiness even so came to epitomize the putative bond between Devil worship and their sexual orientation. Chignon's articulate and straightforward elucidation of Satanism as a religion of instinctual sensual pleasure, with homoeroticism as a suggested earthly gratification, is noteworthy for fitting well with contemporary ideas about Satan as a saviour from Christian oppression of all things carnal. However, it takes these notions a step further by simultaneously eulogizing same-sex love.

FIGURE 8.3 Caricature by Manuel D'Orazi (1860–1934) of Fersen's Black Masses from *L'Assiette au beurre*, 12 December 1903. In this sanitized representation, the young boy that actually occupied the altar has been replaced with a woman.

ANTI-FEMINISM, PATHOLOGIZATION, AND 'THE PRIESTESSES OF THE NEW CULT'

There existed an overlap between male and female homosexuals not only in the manner of their integration with literary motifs in fiction but also in the social circles in which they moved in real life. An interesting instance of this is that some of the women in Natalie Barney's circle (more of which further on) actively participated in Fersen's *tableaux vivants*.[49] But where male homosexuals who were too bold—like Oscar Wilde or Fersen—found themselves in the dock facing stern judges, lesbians did not really risk ending up in jail.[50] The treatment of them in literature and art to some extent reflects this more tolerant attitude. The love life of lesbians had a voyeuristic appeal to straight male producers and consumers of art and literature, whereas sexual relations between men were a source of intense discomfort.

This is not to say that being a lesbian at the turn of the century was at all an easy thing. Tolerance did not really extend past certain libertine and (to a

degree) bohemian circles. Legal sanctions might not have loomed on the horizon daily, but social ostracism decidedly did and polemics against female homosexuality flowed quite steadily from moralist pens all over Europe. Critique of lesbianism often had an anti-feminist foundation, since increased access to education and jobs for women was thought to masculinize them, which, it was believed by sexologists, in turn led to homosexuality.[51] Aside from the potential grounding in fear of feminism, it has also been proposed that worries concerning a decreasing national birth rate, especially in France, may have contributed to hatred of lesbianism, since it could aggravate that decline.[52]

At the same time, as we have seen, lesbianism constituted a rich source of entertainment, titillation, and, at times, high art. Portrayals tended to be mostly negative, and few women wrote about the subject. A rare example of a lesbian in male-authored nineteenth-century literature who is not dehumanized, corrupt, and wicked is the title character in Guy de Maupassant's short story 'La Femme de Paul' ('Paul's Mistress', 1881).[53] Also more sympathetic in tone is one of the most influential 'Sapphic' works of the final decade of the nineteenth century, Pierre Louÿs's *Les Chansons de Bilitis* ('Songs of Bilitis', 1894), which was written to look like a translation of a text written in ancient Greece. It is often, though not by all critics and scholars, read as presenting a predominantly positive picture of its homosexual protagonist.[54]

Less generous in their approach were the studies produced by psychiatrists like Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) in Germany (*Psychopatia Sexualis*, 1882, translated into several languages, e.g. French in 1895), which painted lesbians and gay men as degenerate and potentially dangerous individuals, not only to themselves. In 1893, Dr Julien Chevalier published *L'Inversion sexuelle* ('Sexual Inversion'), where he emphasized the role of various environmental factors in the development of homosexual behaviour. We here again encounter a language that is often religiously coloured, and he speaks, for example, of how 'the priestesses of the new cult have become legion'.[55] The dissemination of such studies in pathology helped bring about the growth of a subculture of women who self-identified as homosexual, especially in Germany where these theories had been most widely circulated and discussed.[56] The term used for lesbians by Krafft-Ebing and his colleagues at the time was 'inverts', and it is in a way logical that sexual

inversion had come to be strongly linked—particularly in fiction—with religious inversion, that is, Satanism.

One of the more bizarre literary treatments of lesbianism is Joséphin Péladan's *La Gynandre* ('The Gynandryne', 1891). Péladan was a prominent name in nineteenth-century esotericism and very important for its cross-fertilization with the visual arts through his Rosicrucian salons. In spite of his influence, it is worth noting that many people also made fun of this decidedly pretentious and extremely theatrical eccentric.[57] In *La Gynandre*, the heroic Catholic esotericist Tammuz successfully accomplishes the mass-conversion of the lesbians of Paris to heterosexuality by convening a huge orgy where he manipulates the "natural" instincts of the participants. A giant phallus as the main decoration of the room, and the 'Ride of the Valkyries' as background music, creates the proper virile atmosphere for the ritualistic coupling.[58] While Wagner would probably have been quite astonished by this use of his music, other composers wrote works where a struggle between lesbians and a male heterosexual hero was the actual theme. The same year that Péladan published his novel, the opera *Astarte* was composed by Xavier Leroux, with a five-act libretto by Louis de Gramont. It was not performed until 1901, however. It is of interest to us here since it once again presents lesbianism as a cult, this time in ancient Greece and with Astarte as its patron goddess. The great hero Hercules is sent to extinguish it, but ends up enthralled by its high priestess Omphale. Surprisingly, the hero's adventure does not end with him accomplishing his mission, but in the triumph of an unrepentant Omphale. Hercules is destroyed by fire, and Omphale embarks for Lesbos together with one of her female partners. The staging of the opera included a grand lesbian ceremony, witnessed by Hercules, and concluded with a ritual chant and dancing by the lesbians.[59] While this spectacle perpetuated the broader 'religionization' of lesbianism, there were also stage performances that explicitly linked Satanism and homosexuality. In Roland Brevannes's *Les Messes noires* ('Black Masses'), which premiered in February 1904, the obscene rites of Gilles de Rais, La Voisin with her wicked cohorts and, lastly, present-day upper-class Parisian gay men were presented to the audience in salacious detail. La Voisin, it was hinted, was lesbian (though there were also, it seems, suggestions that her female paramour was a hermaphrodite). The final tableau, featuring jaded homophile dandies, was most likely based on Fersen's much-publicized activities.[60]

The first more fully developed treatment of lesbianism combined with Satanism was Catulle Mendès's 1890 novel *Méphistophéla*. This sensationalist book sold well at the time and can be considered a minor Decadent classic, though it is seldom read today and its author is largely a forgotten name whose place in literary history may not be clear to most. I shall therefore commence my discussion of this huge (568 pages) and sprawling novel by providing a brief synopsis, a presentation of Mendès, and a quick glance at the reception of the book.

The main character is Baroness Sophie (later renamed Sophor) d'Hermelinge, and the narrative follows her from innocent childhood to an adult state of drug-dependence and utter moral decadence. Sophie is the product of her mother's seduction—or, rather, rape—of a degenerate invalid Russian nobleman (in order to appropriate his considerable fortune), the last member of a family that is rumoured to have been cursed after an ancestor held Satanic orgies.[61] The narrator suggests two explanations for the career of wickedness Sophie eventually embarks on: hereditary degeneracy or demonic possession.[62] It is never determined which of them is the actual reason.

The young girl grows up in upper-class surroundings in Fontainebleau and plays mildly homoerotic games with the neighbour's daughter, Emmeline. The two form a strong bond, and when Sophie's mother realizes the potential implications of their relationship she tries to keep them apart. This results in Sophie suffering a hysterical attack, during which she complains about a laughter that is hurting her—what the narrator implies is a possessing demon.[63] Such attacks recur later in Sophie's life as well, and we can here note that the diabolical countess Gamiani in de Musset's novella also displays hysterical traits, as do, of course, the Satanist women in Huysmans's *Là-bas*.[64] Mendès's merging of hysteria and demonic possession was, it is safe to assume, further related to the great impact of texts—published in the years immediately preceding the writing of *Méphistophéla*—by the medical men of the Charcot school. As seen in chapter 6, they explained the witch trials of old, as well as past and present cases of demonic possession, as examples of hysteria.[65]

When the two children take their first communion, Sophie again hears the strange sound and at the altar she embraces her friend and kisses her on the mouth, thus establishing early on that her inclinations constitute a rebellion

against God, whom she blasphemes at the place of his worship.[66] Sophie ends up marrying her friend's brother, a baron, but rejects him on their wedding night. He consequently rapes her. This pushes Sophie over the edge and when she goes to Emmeline's chambers and sees her lying there naked she at last comes to understand properly what her sexual preferences actually are. She kisses the breast of her sleeping friend, but is caught in the act by her husband, who beats her savagely. The girls elope and spend a week in a small house on an island in the Seine. There Sophie seduces her friend, but is unable to give her an orgasm since she is too sexually inexperienced herself. This failure causes another hysterical attack. Emmeline then leaves her, and she meets a prostitute named Magalo. The two become lovers, and Magalo gives her friend a new name: Sophor. The latter turns out to be pregnant, but finds the idea of motherhood revolting and after giving birth immediately disposes of her daughter in a convent, to be raised by the nuns.

Sophor, enormously wealthy after the death of her mother, establishes herself as a shining light in the aristocratic circles of Paris, but soon becomes notorious for flaunting her homosexuality. Various amorous adventures follow. Magalo, discarded by Sophor, ends up a pitiable and broken figure. In a deathbed tirade, she lays down to her former lover the demonic nature of their activities. The second part of the novel concludes with the climax of the tale, a phantasmagorical lesbian Black Mass where Sophor becomes one with the demoness presiding over the frenzied rite.

The thrill and pleasure of lesbianism fades over time, and Sophor decides to rekindle the fire of her first love. Seeking out Emmeline to reclaim her, she is disgusted by seeing her breastfeed the youngest of her four children, and asks herself if this is true joy in life, but decides violently against it. Bored and eventually disgusted by lesbian lovemaking, she tries to find new enthusiasm in sadistic pleasures, and installs a torture chamber in her palace, but to no avail.[67] The dispirited and desperate Sophor now gives up her claims to being above the herd and their simple heterosexual way of life. Advised by a doctor, she attempts to find a cure in reuniting with her daughter, but once more hears the laughter ring in her ears at the stirring of an incestuous desire for her own offspring: this plan too is a failure.[68] The novel ends with the assertion that Sophor will remain a slave to her 'atavistic predestination' or to the tempting demoness inhabiting her soul, a 'lamentable example of Neurosis or Possession'.[69] Only on the final page comes the revelation of the name of the demon that has, perhaps, possessed (and at one

point merged with) Sophor: Méphistophéla. This name is probably derived from Heinrich Heine's *Der Doktor Faustus: Ein Tanzpoem* ('Doctor Faustus: A Dance Poem', 1851), where a female version of the tempter Mephistopheles appears.[70] More generally, Mendès references the Faust legend that Marlowe and Goethe had made an important motif in literature, and the title can in this sense be said to indicate that the narrative deals with (diabolical) temptation, here that of following one's sexual inclination.

THE WICKEDEST MAN IN PARIS, CRITICAL RECEPTION AND THE REAL-LIFE MÉPHISTOPHÉLA

Before embarking on a more detailed analysis of *Méphistophéla*, we will look at the author of this lurid tale, and how his reputation might have influenced how contemporaries perceived the novel. I will also briefly consider its reception at the initial publication.

Catulle Mendès (1841–1909) came from a partly Jewish family and grew up in Toulouse. He moved to Paris in 1859 and soon befriended Théophile Gautier (whose daughter he later married), Baudelaire, and other important writers.[71] Baudelaire had planned, but never realized, various novels on salacious topics like lesbianism, and devised a number of juicy prospective titles for them. As Mario Praz has noted, it seems Mendès 'collected these succulent morsels from the Baudelairian table, and retailed them' in his own prose works. Praz describes Mendès as 'the most voluminous and the blackest' among 'all the preachers of misfortune', and complains about his clumsy moralistic tone.[72] In general, later critical opinions of Mendès have been low, especially when it comes to his prose.[73] His poetry, which he himself felt was his serious artistic work, fared better, but was, and is, all the same considered quite minor by the bulk of critics. As for his prose works, A. E. Carter, writing in 1958, provides a typical commentary: 'unattractive curiosities—both pretentious and unpleasant, like the buffets and whatnots of the period, carved with leering mahogany monsters'.[74] Mendès's Gothic-tinged novels and short stories, so brusquely dismissed by Carter, were no doubt strongly sensationalist, quite often bordering on the mildly pornographic.[75] This commercially successful recipe, in combination with his Jewish background, made him unpopular in many quarters already in his own time, and right-wing journalist Léon Daudet (1867–1942) slandered him as 'le juif obscène' ('the lewd Jew').[76] Others, especially those with a taste for

the strange, were more appreciative. Aubrey Beardsley, for example, noted in a letter that 'Catulle Mendès is a great favourite of mine'.[77] Many fellow authors and reviewers also praised him, especially for his flamboyant and elegant (if clearly wordy) writing style.

It is apparent that Mendès was not a strict adherent of conservative middle-class values, neither in writing nor in his personal life. American critic Vance Thompson (1863–1925) designated him 'the true decadent' in a book he published in 1900, and described the young Mendès as follows: 'He wrote rare rhymes, ecstatic, voluptuous, deliriously wicked—for there was in him a brutal streak of original sin'.[78] At the beginning of his career, Mendès was fined and jailed for a comical melodrama he wrote (where characters sleep with corpses and deride religion), and he was known to have been the wickedest man in Paris in his youth—no mean feat, to be sure.[79] Anti-Christian themes run through his œuvre, and many of his poems heap ironic scorn on Christian virtue. The Church is frequently held up in his poetry as an enemy of individual freedom, especially in the erotic realm, whilst religious feelings of guilt caused by sexual extravagances are dismissed as meaningless.[80] Satan appears as a symbol of righteous rebellion, for example, in 'Le Mauvais Choix' ('The Faulty Choice', in *Soirs moroses*, 'Gloomy Nights', 1876) where Christ is condemned for making an error in not siding with Satan in revolt against his father. The Devil can also stand for *joi de vivre*, as in 'Un Miracle de Notre-dame' ('A Miracle of Our Lady', in *Contes épiques*, 'Epic Tales', 1872), where he brings merriment to dispel the glumness and austerity of life in a convent.[81] Personally, Mendès never missed out on an opportunity for sexual indulgence. He was notoriously unfaithful to both his first and second wives, and it has been said that he actively cultivated an anti-heroic persona.[82] Since Mendès was a very public figure, who wrote (and was written about) regularly in major newspapers, it is highly possible that many readers were aware of the author's anything but pure reputation and viewed *Méphistophéla* through this lens.

Mendès had an earnest interest not only in eroticism but also in esotericism, as evidenced by his collection of poems titled *Hespérus* (1872). It revolves around Swedenborgian themes and contains extensive exegesis of the Swede's mystical teachings. The influential Rosicrucian Stanislas de Guaita (1861–1897) subsequently seriously and thoroughly discussed Mendès's contributions to esotericism in an 1885 book.[83] Mendès was also enthusiastic about Éliphas Lévi, whom he knew in private, and introduced Victor Hugo to

him.[84] This personal friendship with the grand occultist is—we shall see—interesting, as there appear to be allusions to Lévi's Baphomet in *Méphistophéla*.

The novel seems to have been generally well-received. Henry Bauer, writing in *L'Écho de Paris*, called it 'the conception of a delicate and charming poet, the dream of a master artist, subtle and refined'.[85] He reassured his readers by asserting that 'the pharisaism of bourgeoisie readers would not find anything to object to in the morality of this beautiful book'.[86] Alexandre Boutique of the Symbolist periodical *La Plume* began his review by describing Mendès as 'one of the foremost authors of our time' and went on to hail *Méphistophéla* as 'his major work as a prose author'.[87] Boutique seems fascinated by Sophor in her capacity as a 'transgressor of the laws of life, divine laws or laws of nature', and delights in how 'to the wonder of our eyes, to the delight of our ears, he [Mendès] lets the magnificence of his Romanticism flow, on pages possessed, saying the mass blaspheming virile love'.[88]

As mentioned, *Méphistophéla* was a commercial success and became something of a cult novel and a signature Decadent text. For example, in *The Green Carnation* (1894), an anonymously published satirical *roman à clef* by Robert Hichens (1864–1950), it is referenced as an example of the moralistic intolerance displayed towards Lord Reggie (a portrait of Lord Alfred Douglas) by an old general, who takes it from him and burns it.[89] According to Jeanette H. Foster, *Méphistophéla* went through half a dozen printings in both French and English between 1890 and 1910. Barbara Grier claims that it was issued at least four times between 1892 and 1899 in the United States, speculating that it was probably printed in English in Paris and brought into the country illegally. I have, however, been unable to find an English translation in any library catalogue, and have doubts that one has ever existed.[90] The novel subsequently fell into obscurity, and was not reissued until a new French edition appeared in 1993.

In conjunction with the original publication of the book, the issue of a potential real model for the Sophor character also caused a small scandal. A present-day scholar, Michael R. Finn, has suggested the name Sophor d'Hermelinge may be a play on Rachilde's pure heroine Hermione de Messiange in *Minette* (1889). At the time, however, Jean Lorrain claimed Sophor to have been modelled on Rachilde herself—perhaps as revenge for

her having spurned Mendès when he tried to seduce her.[91] Elsewhere, Lorrain implied a connection between Sophor and a different lady, an insinuation that would have serious consequences. In December 1891, *L'Écho de Paris* published an article by Lorrain about the youth of one Mathilde de Morny (1863–1944), better known as Missy, whom he referred to as 'Mizy, who has since become the *Méphistoféla* [*sic*] of Mendès'. According to Lorrain, this wicked fiend had brought about the death of the newborn son of one of her friends. For this piece, unusually offensive even for a scandalmonger like Lorrain, he was taken to court and fined the considerable sum of 3,000 francs.[92]

While Mendès was influenced by medical works treating lesbianism as a sort of inherited degenerative disease, the influence also perhaps went in the other direction, as Havelock Ellis refers in passing to *Méphistophéla* in his discussion of 'female inverts' in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*, published seven years after Mendès book.[93] Before writing his pivotal study, Ellis had in fact travelled to Paris for a three-month stay dedicated to talking to French men of letters who had treated homosexuality in their works.[94]

HELL, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND SATANIC PRIDE: REPUDIATING MAGALO'S DEATHBED SERMON

Now let us turn to an examination of some key scenes and themes in the novel. First, we will look at Sophor's eloquent defence of homosexuality, which is interwoven with her embrace of the demonic, and even an identification with Satan. This is most forcefully expressed in the refutation in her own mind (an internal monologue) of an attack on her lifestyle.

When Magalo lies dying, she holds a long sermon to make Sophor mend her ways. 'The bourgeoisie are right', she assures, '[t]hey live in tranquility, they die in tranquility.'[95] God, she claims, punishes those who transgress against his law, and lesbianism is the creation of Satan: 'It must have been he who invented, to ruin us and to provoke the good God, that women should fondle each other.'[96] Both she and Sophor are the victims of demonic possession, she then concludes. The narrator at no point chooses a decisive position in this question. Early on in the novel, the narrator points out parallels between demonological notions of possession by unclean spirits and the antics of Charcot's hysterics, and says that if indeed such evil entities could enter

humans 'it is a dreary demon or a dreary demoness—for why should the tempters not be of either sex, more brutal as men, more insidious and insinuating as women?—that holds the baroness Sophor d'Hermelinge in its grip'.[97] The demon, the narrator says, has given Sophor the 'unclean glory and the unhesitating pride of incomparable sin'.[98]

Her pride dictates how she handles Magalo's words, which make her quite distraught at first. Back in her home, she repudiates to herself the words of her dying friend, in a passage at least as polemically convincing as the latter's words, and certainly more poetically stirring:

> Was it unclean, the blooming lips of women and the freshness of naked breasts? Unclean, the embrace of the beautiful arms washed in fragrant water, and holding, in living censers, fragrances as fervent as the incense of the altars and the myrrh of the tabernacle? What is vile indeed is the rut of the male, the brutal and bestial nuptial union, with a fierceness dripping with perspiration, with a climax that sickens desire; and since the masculine embrace ends in the squalidness of fecundity, the conjugal nights are the detestable horror of the pure dream of love.[99]

The inner monologue runs for several pages, and she further adds:

> And if there was something that was forbidden, if desire not always entailed that its realisation was legitimate, would there not be grandeur in rebelling against the prohibition? … Breaking the law and defying the punishment, is to prevail over the judge. Saying no to God is to become a God of sorts. The being which turns itself into something different from what it should be, creates itself anew, makes itself equal to the creator … woman in love with woman, that is a new order, even more superb by having vanquished the other.[100]

Having assumed this defiant, Promethean stance, Sophor then admits to herself she may indeed be possessed,

> but by what a glorious, what a delightful demon! a Lucifer, heroic like a Penthesilea and subtle like a Parisian woman, advicing all audacities and teaching all stratagems. He was formidable and exquisite! A sort of God who, being woman, would be a devil. … And it was from him she had received the magnificent pride in not lowering her gaze at the looks filled with contempt and hatred, and of carrying infamy like a shining tiara.[101]

Note how she here shifts between likening Lucifer to Penthesilea (the warrior queen of the Amazons in Greek myth) and a Parisian woman, and using the masculine pronoun about her demon god. Hereby, Satan's fluid gender identity is highlighted. Interestingly, the Baroness herself has been described earlier in the book as embodying the Rebel Angel: 'And more than by the joy of the conquests, she was enraptured by the pride! An impudent violator of the laws of nature or the plans of the deity, she had, in delirious fevers, the supreme

arrogance of a Lucifer who, for a moment, had vanquished God.'[102] Elsewhere, Mendès draws a parallel between forbidden (specifically to women) fruit and women's breasts, thus making a connection between lesbian desire and the Fall in the Garden of Eden.[103] All these sentiments would be echoed very closely by Renée Vivien, as will become apparent, and it appears feasible that the arguments Mendès let his anti-heroine utter affected Vivien significantly in her formative years. A possible influence on Mendès in letting a demonic woman sprout such silver-tongued soliloquies could be Jacques Cazotte's famous *Le Diable amoureux*. The feminization of Satan previously mentioned might be an indication of this link. As was the case with Cazotte's she-devil Biondetta, Sophor is allotted ample space by the author to present her case. The hesitation between a supernatural and non-supernatural framing of the demon woman could also be an inheritance from Cazotte and reinforces the generally ambivalent tone of the text.

'EXQUISITE AND WONDERFUL DEMONESS': A LESBIAN BLACK MASS

Sophor's passionate Satanic rejection of heterosexuality, by direct implication simultaneously a refusal of the life proscribed for women by patriarchy, is moreover given a ritual and cultic dimension in the novel. In keeping with the established tradition, Mendès from the very beginning of the book uses a religious language to describe lesbianism as a 'cult' with 'mystical rites', in which his protagonist 'by instinct was a novice'.[104] However, he takes this a step further and makes women who love women part of an actual misandric Satanist sect, at least in a phantasmagorical episode at the core of the narrative. This central scene takes place at a feast of lesbians, in sumptuous private chambers where the champagne flows. In this setting, Sophor has a monumental hallucination or vision of an 'exquisite and grand sabbath where the multitude of beautiful witches and possessed said the mass which blasphemed manly love'.[105] The ritual commences with women dancing in frenzy and ecstasy whilst singing strange litanies:

> You who rejoices in the nocturnal solitudes filled with dreams and invisible caresses! You who hates the nuptial knot and mocks it! … Enemy of weddings, curser of the fertile beds, who finds pleasure in the flat bellies and the bosoms without wrinkles, exquisite and tremendous Demoness, our refuge and our horror, appear upon the altar, Demoness.[106]

A colossal demoness, 'black, red and golden' materializes as requested on the sabbath altar and Sophor recognizes her laughter as that which she has heard in her mind through the years. This 'female Satan of a sabbath without men' is part woman, with long hair and red lips, and part animal with arms and legs covered in golden hairs, a horned forehead and the hooves of a goat.[107] Jean de Palacio has suggested that this creature is inspired by the 'faunesses et satyresses' of Félicien Rops.[108] Lévi's hermaphrodite Baphomet, combining woman's breasts with animal fur and goatlike elements, seems a more likely source.

The demoness pulls up her gold and crimson skirt and offers 'for worship her golden-brown sex like a monstrance'.[109] The female sex organ as a sacred object replacing the Eucharistic host contained in a Catholic monstrance is yet another instance of the 'cultification' of lesbianism, but more intricately and studiously blasphemous than most prior examples. The congregation, with swaying hair and outstretched arms, then chants another lengthy litany with the following refrain: 'Bestow your favour, ineffable Mistress, upon those who despise the marital beds and who curse the cradles!'[110] The verses of the litany deal with how the celebrants have spurned men and driven them to their death while refining the ecstasies of homosexual love. When the singing is done, a procession of knife-wielding priestesses, naked and covered in blood, approaches to offer baskets with penises freshly cut from infants, pouring them out before the feet of the demoness. She then summons wild boars, which —grunting and growling—devour the little organs.[111] The sabbath climaxes with Sophor being invited up the stairs of the altar to receive communion from the demoness, during which the baroness merges with her dark divinity: 'filled with the demoness that she possessed, she felt how she became her. Black, red and golden, it was she who towered, diabolic and heavenly, magnificent'.[112] The vision now turns cosmic in scope. The walls of the room fade away and to Sophor 'the whole city, all the countryside, and the rivers, and the mountains, and the distant continents appeared as Lucifer would see them from the height of his heavenly body'.[113] The ecstatic lesbian cultists dance out along the roads, laughingly tearing men who try to restrain them to pieces. Sophor feels herself become endless and her womb unfolds, 'filled with whirlpools of fire and shadow, and for the rapturous stampeding herd of women it offered itself like the dizzying opening to an abyss'.[114]

Most scholarly interpreters have understood the sabbath scene as deeply misogynistic and a defeat for Sophor. Robert Ziegler sees it as a sign of the protagonist's failure at self-realization: 'In trying to assert her true identity, Sophor can only become the embodiment of a preexisting text, metamorphosing into an imitation demoness who arises from the pages of a dusty grimoire.'[115] This she-demon, however, is surely something much more developed than what has been described by earlier authors, and though the imagery is clearly inspired by, for example, Lévi's Baphomet, it is a gynocentric and misandric vision far beyond anything dreamed up in the grimoires of old, or, for that matter, the more recent esoteric literature available in turn-of-the-century Paris. Hence, it does not signify succumbing to a preordained script, but represents a drastic new version of something only hinted at in earlier material. Further, though on one level this can be read as Sophor accepting pre-existing views of lesbianism as literally demonic, the narrator has already proposed that she may actually be possessed by a demon and has been since youth. Given this central ontological uncertainty—do demons really exist and influence mankind?—at the core of the narrative, it would be reductionist, if we are to respect the novel's internal logic, to simply ascribe events like these to Sophor's internalization of negative stereotypes.

To Barbara Spackman, the sabbath scene 'reads like Huysmans at his most deliriously misogynist and functions to recode as demonic a relation that the novel presents elsewhere as the natural flowering of sensuality'.[116] This is certainly one quite plausible reading, but for a more nuanced understanding it also seems reasonable to take into account the ambivalence in Decadent discourse towards the concept "natural", and towards the demonic (provided, of course, that we assume this text belongs to the genre, which seems a reasonable thing to do). Decadents often celebrate the artificial and unnatural, wherefore naturalness is not necessarily positive. The "natural" development of lesbianism in the protagonist need consequently not be taken as a legitimization of it. The text could be read thus, and the demonic would fit into such an interpretation as the liberatory Satanic force, familiar from numerous texts of the era, which gives support to that which is in fact natural even if it is condemned as unnatural and sinful by Christian moralists. Rather than trying to pin down a "final" meaning of the text, it appears more useful to emphasize its polyvocality and lack of consistency. Mendès—or at least the narrator—is obviously fascinated with lesbians as rebels (and as voyeuristic erotic

spectacle) and shows some sympathy for them as outcasts of society. He is at the same time given to moralizing over them, and making statements that stress their perversity and lack of humanity, which is contrasted with the virtues of a settled and conventional family life. The praise of conventionality is, as we have seen and will presently discuss further, interestingly typically refuted by Sophor in eloquent diatribes that are much longer and more well-argued than the rather lame attempts at rose-tinting the bourgeois life.

'ALL BOOKS ARE BAD': SANCTIMONY OR SATANIC SUBVERSION?

Let us now try to come to grips with the entirety of the novel's construction of lesbianism and female emancipation, especially as it relates to the Luciferian themes Mendès intertwines with these things. Several scholars have commented on the somewhat noncommittal stance assumed by the author.[117] Barbara Spackman points out that there is something potentially subversive about 'the amount of space given over to idyllic descriptions of love and sensuality between women' in the narrative. Additionally, the affection between Sophie and Emmeline 'evolves "naturally," set against a backdrop of forests and gardens, chirping birds and bubbling streams', and hence does not seem perverse as such. There is also a marked sarcasm in descriptions of heterosexual bourgeois ignorance and self-satisfaction, while the only descriptions of marriages highlight nothing but bovine mediocrity or violence and rape.[118]

In his preface to the 1993 edition of the novel, Jean de Palacio reads the description of domestic bliss in the scene where Sophor spies on Emmeline's family as a virulent caricature, where what first seems a laudable return to the proper order of things becomes a sarcastic description of the banality of this order. While the novel as a whole condemns lesbianism, Palacio points out how the author nevertheless both shows compassion towards his heroine and allows her to retain a certain 'greatness in crime', and one begins to wonder, Palacio feels, if he does not value her grand and transgressive love affairs higher than the supposed virtues of the petty family life she rejects.[119]

Mendès the man has been described as an uncompromising elitist who despised the poor taste of the masses and posited a sharp dichotomy in his journalism and elsewhere between the superior man of letters (or artist) and the general public.[120] This further strengthens the impression that his panegyrics to narrow-minded bourgeoisie values must be ironic. Since many

of his readers, at the time when *Méphistophéla* was first published, were likely aware of the author's views, this should have made it difficult for them to accept such passages at face value. There are also other instances in the novel where a literal understanding would seem quite absurd, for example, when reading unsuitable books is held up as a reason for the corruption of young women. Sophor herself thinks: 'For young girls, all books are bad, even the most chaste, since they arouse in these young souls a concern with the unknown, with the unreal.' Music is declared equally bad: 'The evil angels, the tempting spirits hover in the vagueness of the sounds; it is their mystic wingbeats that mark the tempo in the melodies.'[121] It is impossible to take such statements seriously (a highly cultured author suggesting young women should read no books at all and that all music is inherently evil), and they work to mark the moralizing in the novel as either ironic or laughably hypocritical, thus undermining the supposed morality of the narrative. The well-known details of Mendès's own scandalous living probably served to do the same for many readers.

Several scholars have indeed seen Mendès as a hypocrite. Robert Ziegler calls his works 'offensive books authored by a man claiming to be put off by the stink of the iniquities he took pleasure in uncovering' and says that he stands apart from other Decadents 'because of the sanctimony of his tone'.[122] Liz Constable describes Mendès as 'a supposedly decadent writer [who] turns out to be more of a moralizing detractor of decadence'.[123] I am not convinced that Ziegler and Constable are correct in their singling out of Mendès, since the coupling of moralization and fascination seems to me rather a mainstay of Decadent writing (as was also the case in the Gothic novels which provided important impulses for this genre), though the balance between the two, of course, varies greatly between individual authors. Baudelaire and Huysmans, authors at the very centre of the Decadent genre, are other obvious examples of this doubleness. We must also consider the possibility of an intentional irony in the text, or of Mendès simply striving to maintain a respectable reputation for himself—whilst still being able to write of extremely lurid topics and express anti-bourgeoisie sentiments with his anti-heroine as mouthpiece—by trying to pander to what he assumed were the moral convictions of his readership. Authorial intentions aside, the obvious ambiguity of the novel is significant enough in itself. Its genesis is naturally a question of interest, but the actual product can also be seen as one where the author was not in complete control of his material, as was the case with, for

example, John Milton and Jacques Cazotte. What ultimately counts, at least for our present purposes, is the various plausible readings invited (more or less clearly) by a text, not (only) what its creator hoped to convey.

Some scholars have strongly underscored the feminist potential of Mendès's writings. Tammy Berberi summarizes *Méphistophéla* as a chronicle of 'a woman's attempts to reject social expectations of women and to adopt a lesbian lifestyle'.[124] In her view, Mendès's prose in general

> takes up the most common misogynist notions within a complex parody of the patriarchal society that gives rise to them, using brilliantly deployed caricature to distil and highlight the social norms that circumscribed women's lives in the society in which he lived—norms surrounding education, sexuality, marriage, economic independence, and self-expression.[125]

While viewing it all simply as parody seems an example of overly optimistic feminist interpretation, it is certainly true that, as Berberi points out, 'Sophor systematically rejects social norms in her efforts to be self-determined' and 'is acutely aware of the social conventions that conspire to thwart her self-realization'.[126] Her view of herself as a female Satan who scorns Christianity and the subjugation to patriarchy it represents can be viewed as part of this systematic rejection. Singling out Christianity as the main instrument of male chauvinist oppression in this fashion, and accordingly identifying Satanism as by default a facilitator of female emancipation, was fully in accord with ideas held by contemporary feminists like Matilda Joslyn Gage. Berberi seems to understand this as an attempt by Mendès to undermine prevalent stereotypes of lesbians and emancipated women as demonic by reproducing the cliché in absurd caricature.[127]

Méphistophéla is clearly confusing to many readers, and Palacio speaks of an extreme ambiguity inherent in its supposed moral message.[128] Take, for example, the treatment Sophie receives at the hands of her husband, baron Jean. Waelti-Walters writes: 'It is not clear to me whether the author sees Jean's rape of Sophie as a legitimate act of frustrated, legally protected male desire.'[129] Peter Cryle is very sure of the message: 'For the novel's moralizing narrator, Jean is unequivocally the sane, healthy one here. He is exercising his rights, performing his husbandly duty, doing what comes naturally.'[130] All the same, Cryle highlights 'the dramatic irony, disturbing for patriarchal morality . . . that this precipitate expression of virility helps to confirm his wife in her lifelong choice of lesbianism'.[131] He also analyses Sophor later in the novel as 'heroically monstrous'.[132] She certainly comes

across as an exemplary defiant Romantic heroine in scenes like that when she scoffs at the idea that the dull domesticity her childhood love has become caught up in would be the right path for herself as well: 'No! She rebelled against, despised, repudiated these cowardly thoughts. She would never agree to cease being herself!'[133] But at the same time, this is tempered by her admittance of defeat towards the end of the tale, when she 'ceased to mock the good and simple folk who lived as a family', admitting that '[i]t had been wrong of her to be extraordinary, different from other women'.[134]

In the prologue and epilogue, which frame the flashbacks that constitute the rest of the book, the baroness d'Hermelinge, now a withered and grotesque morphine addict, is described as the 'pallid empress of a macabre Lesbos'.[135] Her lesbianism, in its later stages, is thus held up as morbid, with moral and physical ruin as its ultimate consequence. However, it is worth noting that the narrator is surprisingly tolerant of some forms of lesbianism, and early on it is asserted that the little adventures of prostitutes, girls at boarding-school, society ladies, and sexual explorers are not really harmful. This is not the case with the excesses of Sophor, though, which are stated to represent horrid depravity.[136] Such relativization, where there are both acceptable and unacceptable varieties of homosexuality, is nonetheless remarkable in some ways and constitutes one of several factors unsettling the moralistic underpinning of the book.

A distinctly problematic aspect of the novel, if one wants to pronounce it a text with encouraging feminist implications, would be how Sophor is quite consistently denied agency by the narrator: she is either possessed by a demon or suffers from a hereditary degeneracy manifesting as hysteria and homosexuality. Her actions are not freely chosen, but driven by necessity. Further, in the later stages of the novel she takes no real pleasure in lesbianism. At the same time, she sprouts eloquent inner monologues, which instead celebrate a prideful Luciferian self-realization and freedom from social constraints. This self-understanding may be undermined as false by the narrator, but the very fact that it is present and explicated in a forceful, persuasive, and articulate manner can be seen as instilling the text with an emancipatory potential, and furthering the destabilization of the shaky foundations upon which the condemning passages rest.

Emma Donoghue perceives *Méphistophéla* as trashy fiction on one level, but simultaneously as 'a complex portrait of a woman who lives as a loner within a community of the like-minded, who chooses and acts but thinks of

herself as a slave'.[137] Donoghue, then, repudiates the notion of Sophor lacking agency as a simple case of false consciousness (which is a bit odd, since she is not a real person and the narrator explicitly contradicts Donoghue's reading). It has also been suggested that *Méphistophéla* is the first novel to take the discovery of a lesbian identity as its central theme, and that it is pioneering in presenting the entire life story of a homosexual woman.[138] Since the protagonist is a lesbian, and not a man or woman getting involved with such an individual to his or her great horror, this ambiguous text—in spite of its perpetuation of negative stereotypes—was clearly something quite new at the time.[139] As Gretchen Schultz observes, 'male-authored lesbian texts were overwhelmingly objectifying, thus representing the very opposite of identification', something which, in fact, does not hold true concerning *Méphistophéla*.[140] If nothing else, this is a likely reason why it appealed to lesbian readers (something we will discuss examples of presently). In spite of the negative portrait of lesbianism, it is easy to see why several other aspects of the book made homosexual female readers feel it was to some extent empowering. The lesbian character is not only the protagonist of the tale, but is allowed a voice to speak for herself in long, persuasive passages (even if her voice is occasionally drowned out by the pontificating of the narrator). She is also (during most of the novel) unashamed of her sexual orientation and adopts a defiant stance in relation to society's condemnation. Sophor's attitude is, as Mendès puts it, that of 'the rebel who does not lower its gaze', and she 'took pride in being strange and detestable'.[141] The baroness wants to flaunt how aberrant she is, in order to 'challenge societal hypocrisy or decency'.[142] For turn-of-the-century lesbians, this figure—exploring previously undreamed of rebellious and radical options—must have been fascinating. In parts of the novel, Sophor has doubts about her own lifestyle and inclinations, but in the case of certain categories of readers the celebration of them left a stronger impression (more on this). This double nature of the text, then, is what rendered it palatable to some real-life lesbians and made it—as I hope to show—an important inspiration to Renée Vivien, the Luciferian lesbian poet to whom we shall now turn. As we will see, Vivien herself explicitly stated *Méphistophéla* to have been an influential reading experience.

Renée Vivien, whose real name was Pauline Mary Tarn (1877–1909), was one of the first women to write openly lesbian poetry. She was an explicit gynocentric feminist (albeit primarily of an elitist, individualist bent) and connected these ideas as well as her sexual orientation to Satanism in a series of radical poetic pieces. As a fifteen-year-old, she read Baudelaire in secret, and the influence of his poems shows very clearly in her own œuvre. Swinburne is another obvious role model, and her personal library contained fifteen heavily read and annotated volumes of his work.[143] From a young age, Vivien was also familiar with George Sand's writing.[144] Judging by Vivien's use of the figure of Satan, it seems reasonable to assume Sand's impassioned panegyric to Lucifer as a liberator in *Consuelo* might have been one of the many French influences on the Anglo-American poetess, not least given the rumours concerning Sand as lesbian or bisexual.[145] Finally, as I have indicated earlier, Mendès's *Méphistophéla* also seems to have given important impulses to Vivien's writing.

Vivien was born to an English father and an American mother, and spent her early years in Paris. The family was wealthy, since her paternal grandfather owned a chain of retail stores. She started her studies at a Catholic boarding school in Fontainebleau, and in her letters to friends, Vivien expressed frustration at having to participate in social rituals and with the attempts to socialize her into "proper" womanhood.[146] Vivien's memories of childhood were unhappy, and the relationship with her mother remained strained throughout her life. Her father died when she was nine, and Mrs Tarn, according to her daughter, tried to have her declared insane to get hold of her inheritance, since she had no money of her own. This plan did not succeed, in spite of Mrs Tarn's encouragement of all her child's eccentricities and constant telling of stories about mentally ill relatives. After a legal confrontation with her mother, she ended up a ward of the court.[147] At this point, Vivien lived in England, but true liberty, she felt, could only be achieved by returning to Paris. She moved back in 1897 and began to write poetry seriously.[148] Paris, with its reputation as the "city of Sodom and Gomorrah", attracted both male and female homosexuals from all over the world. It may not have been the case that this city was a lot more progressive and allowing towards them, but rather that it tended to leave its foreigners alone, in particular those with considerable wealth.[149]

In late 1899, Vivien met Natalie Clifford Barney (1876–1972), an enormously affluent American heiress who led a flamboyantly lesbian life,

and they became lovers. The relationship lasted until 1901, with a brief reconciliation in 1904 when they travelled to Lesbos together in the hope of establishing a colony of women poets there. Vivien eventually purchased a villa on the island, which she visited several times a year. Sappho was an important example to both of them, though Vivien's view of her, unlike Barney's, was heavily coloured by Decadence.[150] The former's interest was serious enough for her to study ancient Greek to read Sappho in original, and she eventually translated her into French. Almost all of Vivien's output, in fact, was in French. She had a command of this language that was considered impressive by most, and her poems have even—though this is clearly hyperbole—been described as among the most technically perfect ever in the French language.[151] Her first book appeared in 1901 and she died in 1909, but during these eight years she was remarkably prolific. She produced approximately twenty separate volumes, mostly poetry but also short stories, a novel, and an unfinished biography of Anne Boleyn.[152]

The name that Pauline Tarn took in France seems to suggest both her rebirth (*renée*)—as a more or less overt lesbian, a writer, and a Frenchwoman—and a reference to the sorceress Vivien of the Lake from Arthurian legend, an icon of feminine evil and guile in texts like Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* cycle (published in several parts, 1856–85) and images like Burne-Jones's *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872–77).[153] As discussed in chapter 6, Burne-Jones's famous painting depicts a woman stealing a man's magical power, empowering herself and disenfranchising him as it were. This would probably have been a narrative content the young woman formerly known as Pauline Tarn appreciated.

The circles Vivien and her lovers moved in were those of aristocracy or opulent wealth, and they associated with major names in the arts. The last-mentioned is evidenced, for example, by the marble bust of Vivien sculpted by Rodin, now on display at the Rodin Museum in Paris. Like many of her upper class and artistic friends, Vivien was an extreme elitist with little regard for the public. This is evident in many places. To give just one illustration, she wrote in a letter to her mentor Jean-Charles Brun in 1906: 'you are a poet, that is, above the mass of men'.[154] After the press responded unfavourably to her 1906 poetry collection *À l'heure des main jointes* ('At the Hour of Hand-in-Hand'), she withdrew her books from public circulation. Most of her work was in fact not "commercial" to begin with, as her principal publisher, Lemerre, printed it at the author's expense. Her final poetry collections were

issued in small editions and distributed only among her friends (though they were republished several times soon after her death).[155]

The well-known French author Colette (1873–1954), who was Vivien's neighbour in Paris, gives a detailed description of her home in a chapter of *Le Pur et l'impur* ('The Pure and the Impure', 1932):

> Except for some gigantic Buddhas, all the furnishings moved mysteriously: after provoking surprise and admiration for a time, they had a way of disappearing. … Among the unstable marvels, Renée wandered, not so much clad as veiled in black or purple, almost invisible in the scented darkness of the immense rooms barricaded with leaded windows, the air heavy with curtains and incense.[156]

This was not an ambience Colette enjoyed much, and one day, 'nauseated by the funereal perfumes', she 'tried to open the window: it was nailed shut'.[157] The atmosphere may have been gloomy, but Colette describes Vivien as a cheerful person, whom she never observed being sad.[158] Notwithstanding, Colette also delineates Vivien's tragic anorexia and alcoholism, and it seems the poetess subsisted more or less only on fruit, some rice and strong drink. Although she did not partake of much food herself, she was fond of serving her friends extravagantly exotic meals, as befitted a Decadent hostess seemingly doing her best to live up to the eccentricities of Huysmans's des Esseintes (figure 8.4).[159]

Vivien died on 18 November 1909 from an occlusion of the stomach, pneumonia, tuberculosis, or possibly the side effects of anorexia—there are many different versions of what killed her. She was only thirty-two years old. Three days before she passed away, she converted to Catholicism. Her friends believed the ultimate cause of death was a lack of will to live.[160] Natalie Clifford Barney even claims, in her *Aventures de l'Esprit* ('Adventures of the Mind', 1929), that Vivien was a 'priestess of death, and death was her last masterpiece'. She explicates further: 'This was not a suicide: those who love life kill themselves, those who love death let themselves die.'[161] Barney dubs Vivien's writing career 'the evolution of a mystic', adding: 'No one brought more mysticism to her sensuality, more sensuality to her mystic transports, than Renée Vivien.'[162] She is unsurprised that her friend turned to Catholicism when she was at death's door, commenting that she 'inevitably had to come to the religion that was the most capable of satisfying her being that was always eager for ceremonies and images, and her heart long since exhausted before the altar of carnal idols'.[163] She sees this as part of a recurring pattern, and Vivien as 'simply one more

poet, worn out by suffering and weariness', who 'accepted, in view of a possible eternity, that last aspect of sensuality: Catholicism'.[164]

FIGURE 8.4 Renée Vivien in Nice, striking an appropriately witchy pose with her cats. Photo courtesy of Imogen Bright.

‘AN ACOLYTE DRUNK ON SACRED FRAGRANCES’: VIVIEN’S OBSESSION WITH RELIGION

The fascination with religion and its attributes noted by Barney is also reflected in most of Vivien’s books, where ritualism and spirituality—typically of a dark and more or less sinister type—are major themes. Even figures not usually associated with the dark side are frequently given such an interpretation by Vivien. One example of this is ‘Incipit Liber Veneris Caecorum’ (‘Here Begins the Book on the Venus of the Blind’), the opening piece of *La Vénus des aveugles* (‘The Venus of the Blind’, 1904), where we are offered a description of a temple dedicated to an ominous nocturnal Venus.[165] ‘Notre Dame des Fièvres’ (‘Our Lady of Fevers’, a poem incorporated in the novel *Une Femme m’apparut*, ‘A Woman Appeared to Me’, 1904) celebrates a pestilential deity of disease, blending liturgical language with blasphemy, eroticism, and morbidity in a manner similar to Swinburne and Baudelaire.[166]

In her late teens, before moving back to Paris, Vivien nourished vague plans to write a work exposing the “true” doctrine of Christ, which she felt was unlike that presented by both Anglicans and Catholics.[167] Evidently, she abandoned these plans. When Christ and his Father are mentioned in her writings, it is usually in the context of an explicit rejection of them, as in ‘Ainsi je parlerai …’ (‘Thus I Will Speak …’, in *À l’heure des main jointes*, ‘At the Hour of Hand-in-Hand’, 1906):

> If the Lord leaned his head over me on my death,
> I would tell him: ‘Oh Christ, I do not know you.’
> ‘Lord, your strict law was never mine,
> And so I lived only a simple pagan.’[168]

Lesbianism is here defiantly held up as a crime against the commands of God: ‘And I loved this woman, in defiance of your laws’.[169] She further explicates:

> I would not pay attention to the hymns of angels,
> Having heard in the olden days the strange chants,
> The songs of this Lesbos whose choirs have been silenced . . .
> And I would not know how to celebrate your virtues.

She then adds, somewhat softening the iconoclastic content of the poem: 'I never attempted a fierce rebellion: / The kiss was my mouth's only blasphemy'.[170] While it is somewhat drastic to read the poetic voice as completely analogous with the author, these last lines at least do not really apply to Vivien herself, since she had already published several unabashedly Satanic poems in the preceding years.

Vivien, with her great interest in religious motifs, unhesitatingly acceded to the tradition expressed in *Méphistophéla* and a myriad of older works, where lesbianism is depicted as a sort of cult. The protagonist in Vivien's autobiographic novel *Une Femme m'apparut*—that is, a fictionalized version of the author herself—delineates her relationship with Barney accordingly: 'I knew the stupor of an acolyte drunk on sacred fragrances.'[171] Barney is later described as the 'perverse Madonna of profane chapels'.[172] San Giovanni, a character in the novel who is a sort of parallel alter ego of the author, proclaims: 'I have exalted love of the noble harmonies and of feminine beauty so far as to become a Faith. Any belief that inspires devotion and sacrifice is a true religion.'[173] These are but some examples from a text that is, like so many others produced by Vivien, thoroughly permeated with religious language.

Vicki L. Kirsch devotes her 1990 doctoral dissertation to applying a history of religions approach to the combination of art and ritual in the Natalie Barney circle. She claims that texts by Barney and Vivien have 'a religious valence to them and could, therefore, be used as the sacred texts of a religious community'.[174] Unfortunately, much of her reasoning is far-fetched and rests on a very loose textual grounding. For example, she speculates unconvincingly about *Une Femme m'apparut* having its foundation in certain major tenets of the Buddhist tradition, but cannot provide any examples of this that are specific enough to be even remotely persuasive.[175] Vivien did, however, decidedly take an interest, at least aesthetical, in Buddhism. This is evidenced by the large collection of Buddha statues she kept in her home towards the end of her life, to which she dedicated offerings of lady apples.[176]

As we have already seen numerous examples of, this was a time when playfulness, iconoclasm, and various forms of art mingled with serious spiritual striving. Many more or less radical artists, for example, those treated in chapter 7, tended to combine their (in some sense) spiritual art with a harsh rejection of Christian religiosity. In Vivien's case, this rejection is related to her conclusion that Christianity was a natural enemy for a lesbian, as seen in

‘Ainsi je parlerai …’. She furthermore concluded (which will be evident from material that I will discuss presently) that the church and God were oppressors of all women, not just homosexuals. This inference did not lead her to discard the symbols of Christianity, but rather resulted in an active attempt to subvert them by turning the tables through reconceptualizing some of the central myths and figures. Among these was Satan, whom she utilized as a positive symbol of female emancipation and women’s supreme value in a manner that can properly be described as an explicit Satanic feminism.

‘THE MYSTERY OF THE NIGHT’: SATAN AS THE CREATOR OF WOMAN AND SAPPHO’S INSPIRER

A very clear example of such Satanic feminism in Vivien’s writing is her reimagining of Genesis 1–2 in ‘La Genèse profane’ (‘The Profane Genesis’, in the prose poem collection *Brumes de Fjords*, ‘Mists of the Fjords’, 1902). This text, mimicking scripture in its formal structure, concludes the volume in question, almost taking on the character of a manifesto of sorts. *Brumes de Fjords* was the final book Vivien published without revealing her gender (the first works came out under the name R. Vivien or the masculine René Vivien), and I would suggest that ending it with this piece marks a coming out and an outright spurning of all things male. I quote it here in full:

I.—Before the birth of the Universe, there were two eternal principles, Jehovah and Satan.

II.—Jehovah embodied Force, Satan Guile.

III.—However, the two great principles hated each other with a profound hatred.

IV.—At this time, Chaos reigned.

V.—Jehovah said: ‘Let there be light’.—And there was light.

VI.—And Satan created the mystery of the night.

VII.—Jehovah breathed on the vastness and his breath made the sky spring forth.

VIII.—Satan covered the unrelenting azure with the fleeting grace of clouds.

IX.—From the laborious hands of Jehovah spring appeared.

X.—Satan dreamed the melancholy of autumn.

XI.—Jehovah devised the robust or slender shapes of animals.

XII.—Beneath the furtive smile of Satan flowers burst forth.

XIII.—Jehovah kneaded clay. And, of this clay, he made man.

XIV.—From the essence of this same flesh blossomed, idealised, the flesh of woman, Satan’s creation.

XV.—Jehovah bent man and woman under violence and the embrace.

XVI.—Satan taught them the acute subtelty of the caress.

XVII.—Jehova formed the soul of a poet with his breath.

> XVIII.—He inspired the Bard of Ionia, the mighty Homer.
>
> XIX.—Homer celebrated the magnificence of carnage and the glory of spilled blood, the destruction of cities, the sobbing of widows, devastating fires, the flash of swords, the clash of battle.
>
> XX.—Satan bowed down towards the sunset, over the repose of Sappho, the Lesbian.
>
> XXI.—And she sang the fugitive forms of love, the pallors and the ecstasies, the magnificent unfurling of hair, the burning scent of roses, the rainbow, throne of Aphrodite, the bitterness and sweetness of Eros, the sacred dances of the Cretan women around the altar illuminated by stars, solitary slumber while the moon and the Pleiades sink into the night, the immortal pride which is contemptuous of sorrow and smiles in death, and the charm of female kisses to the rhythm of the muffled flow of the sea expiring beneath the voluptuous walls of Mitylene.[177]

It is notable that Jehovah is referred to by the masculine pronoun (*il*, in verses XIII and XVIII), whereas Satan's gender is never indicated. Could it be that Vivien was writing in the tradition, articulated by, for example, Cazotte and Mendès, of feminizing Satan? It is tempting to read it thus also if seen in relation to the Manichean gynocentric world view propagated by the narrator in Vivien's autobiographical *Une Femme m'apparut*: 'All that is ugly, unjust, ferocious, cowardly, emanates from the Male Principle. All that is painfully beautiful and desirable emanates from the Female Principle. … The two Principles are equally powerful, and they hate each other with an inextinguishable hatred.'[178] This sounds exceedingly similar to what is presented in 'La Genèse profane' and would then make Satan the female principle.

The paradox (given that Satan is often seen as male) of gynocentric Satanism has been glossed over by most scholars. Karla Jay, for example, asserts that Barney and Vivien

> were selective in their worship of ancient deities, ignoring Dionysus and Pan, the favourite faun of their male contemporaries, in favor of a few female figures. The male gods who appeared in their work existed primarily to embody negative principles, not as objects of adoration. Thus a more appropriate term than paganism might be 'goddess-worshippers', for Barney and Vivien were devoted to the cult of the Great Mother.[179]

The last claim, which Jay supports with a reference to Jungian Erich Neumann's *Die große Mutter* ('The Great Mother', 1956), is doubtful if one considers how Lilith, a figure of central importance in Vivien's writings and whom we will discuss in the next section, is very clearly an anti-maternal symbol of sterility for the poet—hardly a 'Great Mother'. As a general statement, this therefore simply does not hold water.[180] The question of Satan is not brought up at all by Jay. The conundrum caused by the celebrations of

Satan can be resolved if my suggested reading of the Devil as feminine is accepted, which would, originally enough, make the figure part of the symbolical goddess-worship that otherwise dominates.

In 'La Genèse profane', Vivien concurs with cultural notions of women, here represented by Sappho, as gentle and emotional while men, represented by Homer, are violent and brash. In a feminist move, she turns the hierarchical ordering of the two upside down, however, and celebrates woman as superior. She also accepts the time-honoured Christian concept of woman as Satan's chosen one, but makes this laudable and valuable instead of abhorrent. Jeanne Louise Manning assumes that the women created by Satan are specifically the lesbian women, but looking at the text itself is seems more reasonable to assume that Vivien refers to women in general.[181] The lesbian Sappho appears primarily as the epitome of femininity, while Homer is the epitome of the detestable and destructive traits Vivien sees as inherent in masculinity.

There are a number of other examples of how Vivien relates Satan and demonic creatures to things positive, homosexual and feminine, while masculinity, heterosexuality, and God are deprecated. In the poem 'Donna m'apparve' ('A Woman Appeared to Me'—not to be confused with the novel of the same name—in *La Vénus des aveugles*), Vivien contrasts 'the stupid herd of families' with the triumph of rebellious archangels, which she connects to Sappho.[182] In another poem in the same volume, 'Les succubes disent …' ('The Succubi Say …'), a band of female sexual demons exhort the reader (and this is clearly addressed to a female audience) to become one of them: 'Let us leave the happy lethargy of the homes, / The carmine of rose-bushes and the fragrance of apples', proudly proclaiming 'For we are no longer of the race of men'.[183] Having transcended humanity, they will be 'the Banshees that portend mourning'. Unlike many other pieces by Vivien, this particular poem does not quite come across as a vision of joyous outsiders revelling in their difference.[184] The celebration of the demonic elsewhere in Vivien's writings is usually less ambiguous. During an exchange in *Une Femme m'apparut* between the narrator and San Giovanni (both commonly taken to be fictionalized aspects of Vivien herself) the latter self-ironically states: 'Being read in Hell—what a success! This will compensate me for the limited sales of my volumes in this world.' The narrator then adds that 'Justice, (. . .) fatigued with wandering the terrestrial sphere in vain, has taken refuge in Hell. Because justice is the unique virtue of Demons.'[185]

Various demonic figures aside from Satan are also enrolled in Vivien's lesbian rebellion against God, typically framed in a ritual context or by liturgical language. The pagan mythology Vivien was fond of is here often mingled with elements from Christianity, as in 'Cérès Éleusine' ('Elysian Ceres', in *La Vénus des aveugles*):

> A strange and pale priestess,
> Forsaking the altar of Venus,
> Brings to the Good Goddess
> The datura and lotus
>
> For the blonde embraces the brunette,
> And the servants of Ashtaroth,
> In garments of moonlight
> Mock thee, Deus Sabaoth
>
> The nuns and courtesans
> Mingling belladona and lily
> Sing the profane *Te Deum*
> And joyous *De Profundis* [186]

The lesbian couple are described as servants of Ashtaroth—in later Christian lore a demon or a name for Satan himself (derived from the Canaanite goddess Ashtoreth)—who scorn 'Deus Sabaoth'.[187] The latter is the name used to designate God in the Sanctus (the blessing of the Eucharist in a Catholic Mass).[188] After the servants of the demon in Vivien's poem have mocked God, nuns and courtesans blasphemously sing profane and joyous versions of hymns together (the *De Profundis* is a sombre penitential psalm, asking for the Lord's forgiveness, and making it 'joyous' is a typical example of Vivien's sacrilegious inversions). The flowers mentioned, lotuses and lilies, were among those most popular with Decadents, while the plant belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*) is traditionally associated with witchcraft.[189]

Ashtaroth appears again in the same collection, in 'Treize' ('Thirteen'), where Vivien hymns this figure along with other demons as being enemies of procreation and champions of homosexuality:

> Archangel enemy of births,
> Belial on the fertile wombs marks the number thirteen.

Ashtaroth, Beelzebub, Belial and Moloch
On swollen bellies mark the number thirteen.
. . .
For Belial, Moloch, Beelzebub, Ashtaroth
Make Sodom triumph and trumpet Gomorrah.[190]

This poem reflects Vivien's refusal of woman's role as "breeder", a utilitarian role she spurned as one of the most oppressive aspects of the heterosexuality proscribed by patriarchy. In this, she was in agreement with some strands of contemporary feminism, where the right to at least not only be a mother was an important issue.[191]

In other instances, the Satanic references are more oblique. 'Au Dieu pauvre' ('To an Impoverished God', in *À l'heure des main jointes*, 1906) does not give the name of the god it celebrates, but there are indications that it might be Satan whom the poetic speaker professes her adoration for and humbly presents with her 'dark heart'. The god in question is unrecognized by priests and kings, and is 'poor and sorrowful'—quite like the melancholy fallen angel of French Romantics like Hugo, Sand, and others. That kings have not bothered to appease this entity could be a reference to Michelet's Satan, the enemy of the aristocracy, or Sand's Lucifer in *Consuelo*, who is likewise 'of the people'. Vivien, however, adds her own elitist misgivings and in the final stanza scorns the worship of the Christian God (at least, this seems the likely target of her diatribe) as she in protest turns to the indeterminate figure (who may be Satan) instead:

But I who hate the crowd surrounding the altars,
I who mock the grasping hopes of prayers,
I consecrate to you, Oh gentlest of Immortals,
This devout chant flowering on my bitter lips.[192]

As we have seen some examples of, Satan is certainly far from the only mythological figure celebrated by Vivien, and goddesses from Greco-Roman paganism, such as Venus and Isis, also play an important part. Quantitatively, when looking at her entire œuvre, they are clearly more prominent than the motifs derived from Christian demonology. However, as Virginie Sanders points out, the poems where the latter do appear constitute key texts in her broader stance of spiritual rebellion and questioning of the symbolic order.[193]

Satanism may indeed not be the central concern of her work, but we should also remember that a quantitative method is often ill-suited for this type of analysis. For example, the imagery can at times be overlapping, as in the description of the Roman Bona Dea where a serpent, symbolizing eternal wisdom according to the tale, is coiled at the feet of the goddess.[194] Serpents are a recurring symbol of sagacity in Vivien's work and are elsewhere connected to Satan as well as said to be Lilith's faithful servants.[195] They also seem to have had a presence in her private life. According to a story in painter Romaine Brooks's memoirs, during a meal at Vivien's the hostess went out into her garden and brought in her appropriately witchy pets: frogs and a serpent that she twined around her wrist.[196] Similar to this real-life account, the description of the home of San Giovanni, an aspect of Vivien herself in the autobiographical *Une Femme m'apparut*, is not only decorated in 'the most ambiguous art nouveau' but also with a dried snake skin.[197] Martha Vicinus suggests in passing that the use of snakes as a positive symbol by Vivien serves to 'overturn Eve's sin'.[198] She does not develop this idea any further, but it is in fact quite a significant notion that is typical of Vivien, I would argue: demonization of women is transformed into a source of power and agency, and the unsettling of oppressive anti-feminine Christian symbolism is accomplished by the concurrent appropriation of motifs from other religious contexts, in the case of serpents from Roman paganism, to relativize the Christian interpretation. The blending of pagan and Satanic figures—most prominently Pan or Prometheus with Satan—was of course widespread in the nineteenth century and at times makes it difficult to discern where one ends and the other begins.

'THE DARK BREATH OF LILITH IS WITHIN US': VIVIEN'S USE OF THE 'FIRST WOMAN'

Another non-Christian source that Vivien drew on was Jewish folklore. She was one of the first persons to start employing Lilith as a feminist icon, though she had been preceded by certain texts discussed in chapter 2. These include Moncure Daniel Conway's semi-scholarly *Demonology and Devil-lore* (1878) and Ada Langworthy Collier's book-length poem *Lilith: The Legend of the First Woman* (1885). Conway described Lilith as the first feminist, a 'protomartyr of female independence'.[199] Collier followed his lead and also depicted Satan, who in her poem becomes Lilith's husband, as a rebel with sympathy for the feminist cause. It is fully possible that Vivien knew these

texts, since there are several similarities, not least in the role Satan plays in relation to Lilith. Most tellingly, she, just like Collier, repeatedly uses the Islamic name for Satan, Éblis (Iblis), for example, when he appears alongside Lilith in a stanza of her 'Litanie de la haine' ('Litany of Hate', in *La Vénus des aveugles*).[200] This might very well be an indication of influence from the American poetess.

The lengthiest treatment of Lilith by Vivien is in 'Lilith: Légende Hébraïque' ('Lilith, Hebrew Legend', in *Du vert au violet*, 1903). According to this poem, Lilith was created before Eve, but from a 'breath of dawn' rather than from the flesh of Adam like Eve.[201] She therefore finds the first man to be 'of a gross nature and inferior to herself' and rejects him.[202] This is similar to how Iblis refuses to bow down to Adam in the Quran, since he is made from fire while God's new creation is made from clay.[203] Lilith is thus a Satanic figure of proud independence. One night, she encounters the sorrowful Satan in the shape of a serpent, who admonishes her for ignoring the mystery of love and urges her to indulge in it with Adam. She refuses this suggestion and instead asks Satan to be her 'mystic Lover', proclaiming: 'I shall not conceive and I shall not give birth from the heat of your embrace. But our dreams shall inhabit the earth, and our fantasies shall incarnate in the Future.'[204] He accepts and from their union 'were born the perverse dreams, the wicked fragrances, the poisons of rebellion and lechery that haunt the minds of men and make their souls like the dangerous and sad souls of the Angels of Evil'.[205]

For Vivien, who was disgusted by heterosexual love and the pregnancy it could potentially lead to (feelings she also gives vent to in 'Treize'), emphasizing the sterility of Lilith and Satan's relationship is clearly important. Their coupling instead results in 'perverse' dreams and poisons of revolt and lust, which could be read as a reference to lesbian sexuality and the rebellion against societal mores it constitutes. That Satan, who is here—unlike in 'La Genèse profane'—consistently referred to as 'he' (*il*), accomplishes this through sexual union with Lilith is perhaps somewhat surprising given Vivien's uncompromising gynocentricity and lesbian isolationism in most other contexts. Still, Satan has the shape of a serpent, so it is not ordinary heterosexual intercourse that takes place, but rather a form of metaphysical zooerastia (and, of course, no writer can be expected to be completely consistent at all times).

What of the "perversity" and the similarity to the Angels of Evil, then? Such phrasings must be understood as part of Vivien's Decadent *Umwertung aller Werte*, and as a semantic inversion similar to those of Przybyszewski (see chapter 7). What Przybyszewski does with *Entartung*, elevating it to something noble and useful while denigrating the "normal", Vivien does with lesbianism. With typical Decadent ambiguity, Vivien both attempts to naturalize homosexuality and revels in it as unnatural and diabolical. When opting for the latter way of handling it, she reverses cultural conceptions of artificiality (and Satan), turning them into positive signifiers. When choosing the former strategy, she also employs a confrontational reversal of terms, as when heterosexuality is described as 'an unnatural passion' in *Une Femme m'apparut* (second edition of 1905).[206] Even stronger words can be found in the original 1904 edition of the same novel, when San Giovanni presents her indignant view of the very idea that women would actually fall in love with men: 'I can hardly conceive of such a deviation of the senses. Sadism and the rape of children appear to me infinitely more normal.'[207] Manning sees this as 'almost ludicrous in its extremism'.[208] Yet, the tactic of semantic inversion on display in both of Vivien's approaches fits well with the more radical and subversive forms of Decadent discourse prevalent at the time.[209] The portrayal of Satan as a strongly positive figure in 'La Genèse profane' is in accordance with this Decadent counter-discursive turning of things on their head.

Vivien appears to have viewed herself as a rebel against patriarchy and heterosexuality, who in her poems called on demons to be her frightening allies in the struggle against God the father and his heteronormative human minions. Declaring herself and her peers 'perverse' and allied with fallen angels—making 'evil' her good, so to speak—is hence a way to declare a complete refusal of mainstream society's value system, and of the love offered by males. In the aforementioned 'Litanie de la Haine', Vivien seemingly makes herself the spokesperson of the lesbians and announces that 'We hate the aggressive faces of males' and 'Our rebellion reverberates and growls'. She then frames this in a Satanic symbolism: 'The dark breath of Lilith is within us, / And the kiss of Eblis to us was terrible and gentle'. Further underscoring the opposition to Christianity, she then proclaims: 'We shall reject the mystic weeping of old / And the atonement of candles and lilies'.[210] Vivien here shows herself to stand clearly in the tradition of Mendès, Swinburne, and others, where lesbianism is conceived of as a man-hating

rebellion against God, with Satan as an ally. The inclusion of Lilith as a demoness whose breath fills the lesbian further points in the direction of *Méphistophéla* and its possessing she-devil. A major difference in comparison to all these predecessors, however, is that in this case the author herself is a lesbian.

Vivien also wrote of other mythological demonic feminine figures, such as Gello, a Byzantine demon that threatened mothers with infertility, miscarriage, and crib death. Gello was later identified with Lilith by the influential scholar and statesman Michael Psellos (ca. 1018–1078), so the two can be seen as overlapping to some extent.[211] For Vivien, in the poem 'Gellô' (in *Évocations*, 'Evocations', 1903) this creature becomes a symbol of refusing the love of males:

> She hates the desire that profanes the Wife,
> She roams the night, unquiet and jealous.
> . . .
> You will not know the horrors of the Bride,
> Oh Virgin! for here is pale and jealous Gello.

This 'Bacchante of Death' will adorn the virgin with white violets and surround her with a 'springtime without summer', seemingly killing her so that she will not be defiled by her husband's embrace.[212] Such morbid solutions to the strain society puts on women to conform to its expectations are not uncommon in Vivien's œuvre, but they also have more optimistic counterpoints. The short story 'Le Voile de Vashti' ('The Veil of Vashti', in *La Dame à la louve*, 'The Woman of the Wolf', 1904) is not one of them. The tale of Vashti, the queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus, derives from the Book of Esther (Esther 1:10–22). In spite of a direct command from the king to do so, Vashti refuses to display her beauty in front of her husband and his drunken friends and is therefore exiled. In Vivien's retelling, her refusal is a proudly feminist stance, where she declares Lilith to be her foremother, with the words 'since the rebellion of Lilith, I am the first free woman'.[213] Noncompliant, she then walks into the desert, most likely to face death, but pleased that she is free. Earlier in the tale, Vashti has heard the legend of Lilith recounted by an elderly Jewish slave woman, who tells of how 'Lilith, disdainful of the love of the man, preferred the embrace of the Serpent'.[214] Oddly for a Jewish slave, she uses the name Éblis for the Serpent. Vashti's

response to the story is to muse that she would have liked to be Lilith, but also to be Éblis, since, she says, 'I love the vanquished … all those who attempt the Impossible.'[215]

Lilith is also one of the eleven female figures in Vivien's 'Souveraines' ('Sovereigns', in *Èvocations*).[216] They all proudly present their accomplishments, in her case as follows:

> With shadows and demons I populated the universe.
> Before Eve, I was the light of the world
> And I loved the tempting and perverse serpent.
> I conceived the Unreal in my profound soul.
> The Earth bowed to my royalty.[217]

But like all the figures, she ends her utterance with the words 'The fatal star of beauty / I was not fortunate'.[218] Jay interprets this as a way of saying that 'no matter how beautiful the woman is and no matter what she has accomplished, the exceptional woman is always unhappy'.[219]

'HER FEMININE POWER AT DUSK PERVADES': VIVIEN'S WITCHES

In another poem, 'Enseignement' ('Instruction', in *Sillages*, 'Wake', 1908), Vivien writes about witches. She describes them as nocturnal creatures, unloved outsiders with 'peaceful and dark souls'. They have, she states, a 'right to be', adding:

> As we know it is a grievous wrong to be abnormal,
> Their harmless hearts conceived no evil.
> But these women are the accursed strangers.[220]

It would seem the witch here becomes a metaphor for the lesbian, a symbolism evident in the following lines about how they cannot be open with their love: 'They know how to hide from the harsh light of day / Their heart, their sorrowful hatred and their sorrowful love'.[221] Conceiving the witch as a noble rebel fits well with images widely spread among French literati at the time, as the reader will recall from chapter 6. Texts in English, such as Leland's *Aradia* (1899) and Gage's *Woman, Church and State* (1893), also conveyed this image of the witch as a righteous Satanic revolutionary, often

with more or less explicit feminist tendencies. Making the witch a persecuted martyr of lesbian love, as I would say is the implication in Vivien's poem, was slightly more original. Lesbian witches, however, were certainly not entirely unheard of.[222] At the beginning of this chapter we have encountered figures like the demonic lesbian Gamiani in Alfred de Musset's eponymous 1833 novel, who is repeatedly linked to witchcraft, and, of course, the homosexual witches' coven cutting off the penises of little boys in Mendès's *Méphistophéla*.

Vivien's namesake, the well-known mythological sorceress, also appears several times in her work. Vivienne (also spelt Viviane) is one of several names for the morally ambiguous Lady of the Lake in Arthurian legend, and as mentioned constitutes the probable source for the poetess's new surname. In 'Telle que Viviane' ('Like Viviane', in *La Vénus des aveugles*), a treacherous but irresistibly attractive lover is likened to Viviane.[223] There are also three poems—in three different collections—dealing with the actual figure, all bearing simply the title 'Viviane'. The poem contained in *Évocations* (1903) focuses on her seduction of Merlin, as does the one in *Du vert au violet* (also 1903), but with the added twist that though she has dispossessed him of his wisdom, she has given Merlin something more precious: 'emptiness of thought'.[224] The lengthiest treatment is that in *À l'heure des main jointes*, which is an ominous and sensuous description of the femme fatale features of the Arthurian enchantress:

> Her feminine power at dusk pervades:
> She becomes irresistible in the moonlight
> Herdsmen believed they saw, with their naïve eyes
> Green serpents slide along her bare arms.
> At midnight, crowned by the most beautiful star
> Sometimes, she is cruel and sometimes she is good.[225]

The last line in the quote is typical of the poet's portrayal of witches, lesbians, and demons as morally ambiguous. In this sense, her depictions are not always a simple reversal of terms and concepts (evil becoming good) but can further be seen as a relativization and nuancing of taken for granted cultural categories and myths, or an embracing of the negative aspects of the universe along with the positive. It could also be viewed as a humanization of the femme fatale, which shows her to be like most of us, neither exclusively

good nor bad. This deconstruction, of course, is something of a paradox: a femme fatale who is not wicked is not really a femme fatale, by definition.

THE BOOK THAT 'OPENED UNDREAMED OF GARDENS': VIVIEN'S READING OF *MÉPHISTOPHÉLA*

I have already numerous times highlighted instances where Vivien appears to be inspired by *Méphistophéla*. Her general attitude towards males contains a clear echo of Mendès's heroine, who thinks to herself that she has 'put marriage to scorn', avenging the degradation of her wedding night by triumphing over 'the husbands and the lovers'.[226] For a woman like Vivien, Mendès's novel suggested a tactic of using the literal demonization of lesbians as a language of protest to give heteronormative patriarchy a defiant kick between the legs, if the crude metaphor is allowed. The Satanic discourse employed by Vivien is usually attributed to her reading of Baudelaire, but to me Mendès seems at least as important an influence.[227] In *Une Femme m'apparut*, San Giovanni, one of the two characters who represent Vivien herself, explains how important Mendès's book was to her:

> The reading of *Méphistophéla* opened undreamed of gardens and the path to unknown stars. I loved this book, in spite of the bad taste of some chapters, where bourgeois morality joined with popular melodrama. I realized from that moment that uncertain lips could unite without disgust with other lips, more proficient but no less timid. I realized that there flowered on earth faerie kisses without regret and without remorse.[228]

Judging by some clear parallels in her use of Satanic imagery, this was not all she learned from Mendès. His novel offered women like Vivien a taste of a lesbian subjectivity of sorts and provided rousing speeches of defiant Luciferian lesbianism, a combination she would later reproduce. It is further hard to find any examples prior to *Méphistophéla* of the hard-line lesbian misandry propagated by Vivien, wherefore it is logical to assume this text heavily influenced her ideas in these matters. The fact that she presents them in the framework of a Satanic symbolism makes this route of ideas even more plausible. Her portrayal of Satan as a feminine force also points in this direction. Another potential inheritance from Mendès can be found in the poem 'A Mon Démon familier' ('To My Familiar Demon') in the posthumous *Le Vent des vaisseaux* ('The Wind of the Ships', 1909), where the poetess addresses her 'Familiar Demon' with the words 'You who haunts my cruel nights, oh Demon! // … You reign over my heart relentless and supreme!'[229]

This sounds very much like the demon possessing Sophor in Mendès's novel, though it could also be (perhaps simultaneously) a borrowing from classical literature, where descriptions of such more or less benevolent "daimons" (at certain points in Greek history a sort of inspiring spirit, though its functions and nature varied much over time) abound. The elegiac speaker then asks her demon to carry her away from the cruel masses of men:

> The populace is small and ugly. Let us go far away,
> From their petty utterances, from their unfaithful hearts.
> Let us fly away by the powerful sound of broad wings
> Which you know to deploy in the tempestuous wind![230]

This is tangibly close to the elitist musings of the Satanic Sophor and also brings to mind the cosmic flight she embarks on at the climax of the lesbian Black Mass.

There has been practically no earlier sustained discussion of Mendès's influence on Vivien. I believe this influence to be more deep-going than has previously been assumed. This, then, is a highly interesting example of a woman remoulding themes and motifs from more or less misogynist male writing to suit her own ends (which also applies, of course, to her adaptations of motifs from Baudelaire and Swinburne). It also shows how a text with many ambiguities and a somewhat inconsistent moral message may suggest to radical readers a special type of potential for shifting symbolic systems around. Just like it was not a complete coincidence that the Romantics chose *Paradise Lost* as the starting point for their reworkings of Satan—rather than any random text about the figure—it was hardly coincidence that the imagery of *Méphistophéla* came to influence Vivien so profoundly. Mendès's novel, like Milton's epic, was ambiguous in just the right way to function as a starting point for the creation of counter-myths. There are parallels to this elsewhere in the history of lesbianism, for example, in how an early (founded in 1955) American lesbian political and social organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, found a useful model in Louÿs's *Chansons de Bilitis*, which, though it was probably written primarily to titillate male readers, contained a certain element of sympathy towards women loving women.[231]

Perhaps unexpectedly for a poet with her particular ideas, Vivien at first did not announce her gender when publishing her work, possibly because she feared doing so might make critics take her less seriously. Her first volume of poetry was thus published under the name R. Vivien, which then became René Vivien and eventually the female Renée Vivien.[232] Her first volumes, which critics believed had been written by a man, were greeted with enthusiastic reviews and descriptions like 'classicisme impeccable' were typical. In her book of translations, *Sapho*, and *Évocations* (both 1903), she revealed her gender as well as her sexual orientation. This did not immediately alter critical perceptions. However, the incessantly morbid and dark *La Vénus des aveugles* (1904) did. Her other 1904 works, the novel *Une femme m'apparut* and the short story collection *La dame à la louve*, also met with hostile reviews. Fernand Vialle in *Revue La Brise* (May 1904) suggested these books represented the plunge of a promising young author into 'a depraved genre and a sickly psychology'.[233] Brofman theorizes that it cannot be the lesbian content that critics found to be so disturbing, since it had been present in the 1903 books as well. Rather, she suggests, the problem in 1904 lay in the open attacks on men and male oppression of women.[234] I am not entirely convinced by this, as such ideas were on display already in *Brumes de fjords* (1902), though admittedly it was believed to be written by a man. Not all critics were offended by her later production. Some saw merit in her unwavering defiance. But most, it must be said, did not. Angered and disappointed by this, Vivien did not distribute any of her works after 1907 to the general public.[235] Her poems, now surrounded by a vaguely scandalous aura, were supposedly banned from the afternoon poetry readings of the Comédie française in the 1920s.[236] This, and some unfavourable reviews, seems to be as far as negative response went, and she was never prosecuted under censorship laws or otherwise directly oppressed by any kind of external pressures.[237]

There are two versions of Vivien's complete poetry, one from 1923 and one from 1934, both of which have been reprinted later (1975 and 1986, respectively).[238] After her death, she soon became regularly discussed by literary critics.[239] Even so, she has never been established as a really major name in French literature. Interest in France, but even more so in the United States, grew with the advent of the feminist and gay liberation movements from the late 1960s onwards. As will be discussed in more detail, evaluations of her merits as a feminist and (political) lesbian have varied, with some

dismissing her as 'inauthentic' or dangerously Decadent and morbid, while others have hailed her as a pioneering revisionist mythmaker.[240] We will now consider some present-day scholarly feminist responses to Vivien's works, which span this spectrum.

A FAILED FEMINIST? GYNOCENTRIC SATANISM AND THE PARADOXES OF DECADENCE

As we have seen in the discussion of various themes and motifs in Vivien's writing, it is consistently gynocentric, aggressively pro-lesbian, and filled with vitriolic condemnations of masculine oppression of women. An institution like marriage was therefore a typical target for Vivien, as in the poem 'Je pleure sur Toi …' ('I Cry Over You …', in *À l'heure des main jointes*), which she wrote to a friend after her marriage, asserting that 'I have come to mourn you, as one mourns a dead person'. She laments that her friend is now a wife, in submission to a husband, and no longer a 'sister of the Walkyries'.[241] The most basic concept of feminism, along with a strong hatred of men that is hardly integral to it, is expressed explicitly by San Giovanni, Vivien's alter ego: 'A great thirst for justice inflamed me chimerically. I was aroused on behalf of the denigrated woman, subservient to imbecile masculine tyranny. I learned to hate the male, for the base savagery of his laws and his impure morals. I considered his works and deemed them wicked.'[242] San Giovanni also comments tellingly on her feelings about men. 'I do not love nor hate them,' she says, and then announces that '[t]hey are political adversaries whom it pleases me to defame for the sake of the cause'.[243] In the intensely gynocentric world view of Vivien and her lover Natalie Barney, that which was feminine was good, while all things masculine were bad. On the topic of 'women-boys', masculine lesbians, Barney is supposed to have remarked, 'Why would anyone want to resemble her enemies?' They viewed fragility and softness as innate female characteristics, not socially produced, and they therefore felt it only natural to celebrate them.[244] That they were pioneers in articulating a specific homosexual identity is beyond doubt. This idea was quite recent, and previously homosexuality had simply been a specific type of sexual act, little more. Now, it started to emerge as a more or less defined subculture, and Vivien was among its first spokespersons.[245] Further, Vivien's writing about goddesses, Lilith, witches, and other symbols of feminine power clearly anticipate concerns with "mythmaking" and building counter-discourses in order to fight patriarchy, that came to the fore

in late 1960s feminism. As we have seen in earlier chapters, this was also a concern among many nineteenth-century feminists, and Vivien is best understood as part of this broader tendency.

While her credentials as a pioneer in this sense are undisputed, Vivien's status as a feminist author on a more specific political level has been controversial, as has the way she relied on Decadence in finding her language of resistance. Lillian Faderman dismisses Vivien's poetry as having little to do with the feminist insights she displayed in other texts. She criticizes it for using a Baudelairian imagery, which identifies lesbianism with the dark and depraved side of things. Therefore, Faderman argues in a highly presentistic manner, she is 'irrelevant to contemporary lesbians, who have long since escaped from the spell of aesthete-decadence'.[246] Be that as it may for the majority of lesbians in the year 1981, when Faderman wrote, but it tells us little of the poems as part of the culture of their own time.

Faderman has more harsh words for the poetess: 'In her poetry and in much of her life, Vivien seems to have internalized completely the puerile and self-dramatizing aspects of aesthete-decadent literature. … Her enchantment with the decadent-aesthete vision in her writing and her life made her inauthentic.'[247] Faderman's admonishment of Vivien for not being a perfect feminist by the former's Californian 1980s standards is exactly the type of ahistorical analysis that I wish to distance myself from (see chapter 1). It also displays a rather shallow—or even non-existent—understanding of the mechanisms of Decadent inversion of terms like *sin* and *evil*, as well as a simplistic view of a poetic œuvre filled with ironies, subversive deconstructions, and deliberate (as well as unintentional) ambiguities. The question for me is not if Vivien fulfils certain criteria for being a "proper" feminist, or if she is of use to anyone today as a political writer. Rather, my interest lies in analysing how she used the contemporary discourse of righteous Satanic rebellion to articulate what was clearly, to her mind and to those around her, a feminist ideology in some sense, and trying to understand this articulation by considering relevant intertexts. The task I have set before me here, then, is to analyse the mechanics of Vivien's use of Satan as a means to attack patriarchy: what cultural traditions it draws on, what rhetorical stratagems are employed, and how contradictions in the material are negotiated by Vivien herself.

Pamela J. Annas, like Faderman and others, states that there are several things about Vivien's poetry, marked as it is by turn-of-the-century Decadence,

that are likely to repel today's feminist readers: 'its ambience of languishing lesbians and wilting lilies, of artificiality and death'.[248] Wisely, however, she cautions that 'we cannot read Renée Vivien's world primarily from the perspective of the mores and politics of our own time'.[249] This is my view as well, and I think it important—especially for a historian—to avoid acting as a judge passing sentence on attempts by historical self-described feminists to formulate oppositional strategies.

Not all have seen the Decadent genre as simply an insurmountable divide between Vivien and feminism. A different analysis is suggested by Jeanne Louise Manning, who claims that for Vivien it 'means opposition to Victorian morality and to its symbols, especially marriage and motherhood. … The clichés of decadent romanticism are the means through which she expresses her revolt.' This is the reason for her use of blasphemy as well, according to Manning (and I concur): '[H]er irreverence is closely allied to her contempt for a societal convention sanctified by the church.'[250] Manning develops this idea further on in her dissertation: 'The profanation of the Church gives her the opportunity to rebel against marriage and the family; the perversion of literary traditions against the literary heritage. The use of the "femme fatale" allows her to write about women who destroy male hegemony.'[251] Cassandra Laity, thinking along the same lines, sees Vivien's rethinkings of patriarchal myths as an example that helps 'uncover the conflicts and contradictions of the feminist revisionary process'.[252] That strategies of this sort are fraught with discordances cannot be doubted, and Vivien's œuvre should perhaps be seen as an ongoing process of struggling with these problems, which was cut short by her untimely death before she could develop and refine it into something more consistent. Whether or not the body of work she produced is fully palatable to later feminists, it is a fascinating example of turn-of-the-century feminist renegotiation of religious symbols.

Manning also identifies other perceived problems with the poetess, now singling out egocentricity (understandably problematic in the eyes of a collectivist left-wing feminist) and theatrical role-play: 'Vivien's feminism is narcissistic. It centres first on the self and then extends to a small intellectually and socially compatible group. Vivien's poems contain a series of compensatory self-images, as an advocate of women's rights, as the daring woman who is above the common morality, and as the poet who is intellectually superior to the masses.'[253] The narcissism and compensatory self-images, I would argue, are part and parcel of the specific position of

Satanic defiance and must be understood contextually as an integral component of this strategy. The elitist traits highlighted by Manning can hardly be disputed, and Jay calls attention to them too, bothered by a vision where the new world of beauty and freedom 'would be open to the few, the talented, and the wealthy. It was not a world to replace the present order, but one which offered an escape from it for those who could afford, and who deserved, to go.'[254] Jay moreover accentuates how far removed Vivien and Barney were not only from the plights of less wealthy women but also from any feminist context. They seem to have had no relation to either contemporary or historical feminists, or even, Jay claims, women writers.[255] I believe that this is related to how feminism for Vivien was so completely entwined with homosexuality. It appears as though she viewed homosexual women as the highest and most refined manifestation of their gender, and since there was no openly lesbian Mary Wollstonecraft or suffragette for her to relate to, she conceived of a specifically lesbian-feminist identity without referring to political predecessors or contemporaries. Attempting to articulate this singularity, she turned to, among other things, Satanic discourse, but filtered through the misandric lesbian variety of it hinted at by Baudelaire, but even more by Swinburne and, most clearly, Mendès. Here she found a symbolism reflecting her analysis of Christianity and God the patriarch as a main enemy for women in general and lesbians in particular.[256]

Jay, like me, expresses scepticism towards the tendency among present-day feminists to judge Vivien and Barney by the political standards of our own time. 'The dilemma is ours, really, not theirs,' she states, adding: 'They did not view themselves as politically active feminists. They did not, for example, engage in the struggle for suffrage. Instead, they believed they lived on a poetic plane: Ultimately, they followed the lyre of Sappho, not the temporary currents of politics.'[257] This individualist and aestheticist defence of them would hardly convince Faderman et al., however, who would probably merely see it as further proof supporting their accusations of lacking ideological purity. Moreover, I believe this stance oversimplifies what Vivien hoped to accomplish. It also presents an unfortunate dichotomization between politics and poetry, which in this particular case is not feasible, especially given that Vivien, as Jay herself emphasizes, intentionally wrote for an audience she imagined to be comprised exclusively of women whilst filling her poetry with anti-patriarchal statements.[258] Reducing her project to 'ultimately' being aesthetic rather than political assumes the two are mutually

exclusive, which seems unreasonable in this case.[259] To paraphrase the well-known 1960s maxim 'the private is political' we could here say that 'the aesthetic is political', in that, as Manning has observed, the choice of a specific aesthetic (Decadence) probably had something to do with Vivien feeling that its Satanism, anti-bourgeois ethos, and images of powerful femmes fatales resonated with her own dislike of the reigning ideology of male supremacy, supported by conservative Christianity. That she was mostly interested in emphasizing the right of an elite of lesbians to cast aside the shackles forged by patriarchy does not make her apolitical, merely not a very inclusive collectivist. It would also seem statements like her proclamation of a 'thirst for justice' on behalf of women dominated by men (in *Une femme m'apparut*) contradicts Jay's assertion that Vivien did not think of herself as a politically active feminist. Although uttered by a fictional character (who, however, happens to be an alter ego of the author), this seems a clear declaration that she had certain political intentions with her poetry.

Let us now finally turn to a concluding discussion of Vivien's utilization of concepts like Satan, "evil", demons, and mythical femmes fatales for feminist ends. Engelking claims that '[f]or every feminist mask she wears, Vivien has several that are anti-feminist due to the decadent, often misogynistic and death-loving aesthetic that pervades her work'.[260] That morbidity and a Decadent aesthetic per se would be anti-feminist is a vague and broadly generalizing statement, which can hardly be substantiated. A line of reasoning similar to Engelking's can be found in Shari Benstock's critique of Vivien's vision of 'lesbian love as the incarnation of evil', which she feels 'simultaneously repeats and reverses the patriarchal code', though ultimately 'both visions frame woman in a patriarchal definition'.[261] In Vlada L. Brofman's opinion, this 'strategy is problematic because the alliance she constructs between lesbians and demonic creatures not only does not reverse but actually reinforces the stereotypes, which existed in her time'.[262] Unlike the perceptive close readings that Brofman's dissertation is otherwise filled with, this seems unconvincing. Vivien admittedly chooses to operate within the symbolic system established by patriarchy, but to say that she accomplishes no reversal of it is hardly correct. Choosing the symbolic adversary of the status quo in a system, in this case Satan, as an ally was a well-established radical tactic. We have earlier seen it being put to use by Romantics with revolutionary sympathies, socialists, feminists, Theosophists, and others. They all obviously found it useful as a weapon against power

structures bound up with Christianity, and Vivien should be understood as participating in this tradition. Rebels of these types were often painted as literally demonic by conservative Christians, just like lesbians in Decadent poetry, and they selected to accept and flaunt this connotation as a gesture of defiance. Some of the reasons why they may have considered this effective have been delineated in chapter 3. In the context of Decadence, Satanism could further, as already discussed, be embedded in a broader turning of values on their head. For an elitist like Vivien, it was not a point of concern if pious Catholics or small-minded provincials would feel troubled by her glorifying portrayal of Satan as the patron saint and creator of lesbians—if they did, probably so much the better, to her mind. Her goal was not to normalize female homosexuality, but to demonstrate a rejection of the patriarchal structures condemning it. Selecting a provocative figure like Satan as a means to accomplish this is by no means illogical, especially in the contemporary context of Satanism as a prevalent language of rebellion in European and American culture (a circumstance that Brofman and the other scholars who have studied Vivien show little or no awareness of).

Although many have announced their discomfort with Vivien's embrace of "evil" in the shape of Satan and demonic lesbianism, one of the most well-known names in feminist literary scholarship, Susan Gubar, has suggested a more positive evaluation of Vivien's use of Decadent tropes, arguing that 'she tapped the energy of the decadents' alienated lesbian', of whom the diabolical was an intrinsic component: 'The unholy excess and implacable cruelty of lesbian desire in Vivien's fiction and poetry … uncover the demonic power that drew Baudelaire and Swinburne to the lesbian femme fatale.'[263] In Vivien's case, I believe this 'demonic power' largely consists of a symbolic language that would simultaneously upset conservative Christians and, more important, express the idea of lesbians as glorious outsiders, who, like Milton's Satan, broke free from the rule of the Father. In Gubar's interpretation, Vivien 'subversively implies, moreover, that the lesbian is the epitome of the decadent and that decadence is fundamentally a lesbian literary tradition'.[264] Such a view ascribes great agency to Vivien, as an appropriator of Decadence rather than a passive internalizer of it. The truth probably lies somewhere in between, as we must remember that no author is in absolute control of his or her material or fully independent in relation to genre conventions.

Bonnie Zimmerman states about Vivien's successors in later generations of lesbian authors: 'In self-defense, if for no other reason, we claim alienation as superiority and specialness, and glorify the status of the outlaw … a creature of tooth and claw, of passion and purpose: unassailable, awesome, dangerous, different: distinguished.'[265] This tendency to cultivate an outsider's delusions of grandeur (or playing with an inflated self-image), which is so prominently displayed in Vivien's writing, is also present in much of nineteenth-century Satanism in general. A convergence of the two is therefore quite logical. The use of Satanic motifs by Vivien—though original in its explicitly gynocentric, anti-masculine and lesbian content—is not simply a case of borrowing an isolated motif from, for example, Baudelaire or Mendès. Rather, it represents the employment of larger portions of the discourse of Satanism, scooped up from a heterogeneous pool of radical ideas nourished by Romanticism and Decadence as broader tendencies. Hence, Vivien's Satanism is bubbling with intertextual connotations, which will not be obvious to most of today's readers. Hopefully, a significant number of these links have been laid bare here.

BATS, BEELZEBUB, AND COCAINE: THE LESBIAN POETRY OF MARIE MADELEINE

How unique was Vivien? Quite, we have to say. Yet, there was at least one other female poet of the era with somewhat similar tendencies: Marie Madeleine, the Baroness von Puttkamer (1881–1944). This bestselling and scandalous German author, concerning whom biographical information is scant, has been held up as an example of 'to what extent women who loved women might by this time see in themselves an embodiment of every sensationalistic attribute French literature gave lesbians'.[266] She doubtless cultivated, perhaps with some help from her publishers, a sinister and Gothic image. One typical extratextual example is the endpapers of her collection of poems *In Seligkeit und Sünden* ('In Blessedness and Sin', 1905), which are decorated with bats (figure 8.5).[267] Between 1900 and 1928 she wrote twenty-one books, mostly poetry, but also plays, short stories, and novels. She was most famous for the poems, which included both paeans to Satan and Decadent lesbian eroticism. Unlike Vivien, Marie Madeleine seems to be an instance of someone who has indeed internalized these iniquitous clichés without any attempt at consistently reinterpreting them or adding a feminist angle. Alternatively, she can be seen as an author who did not take the clichés

very seriously but simply embraced them for literary effect and to irritate her conservative relatives.

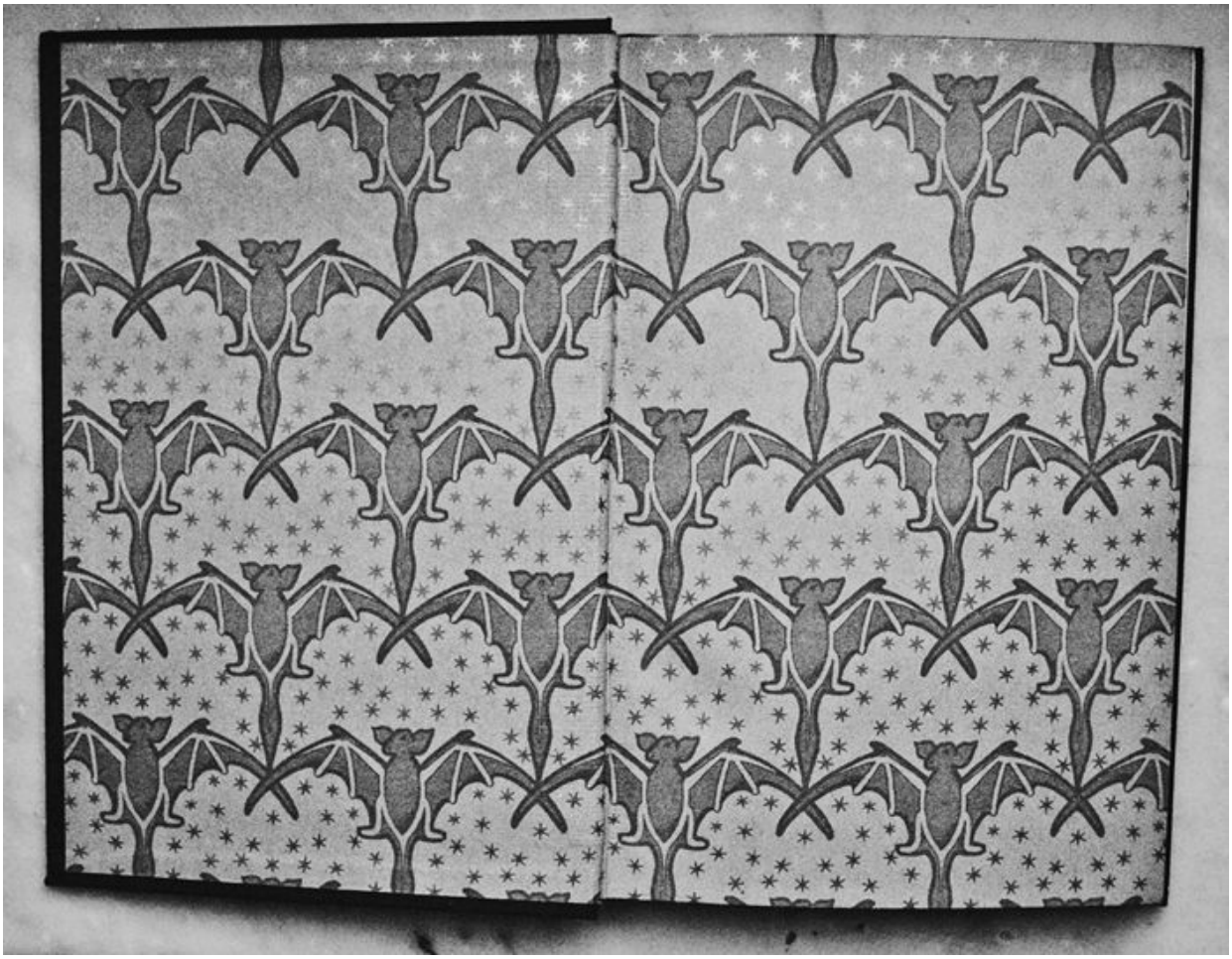

FIGURE 8.5 Endpapers of Marie Madeleine's *In Seligkeit und Sünden* (1905).

Marie Madeleine's father was a merchant. When she was nineteen, she married the thirty-five years older General Baron Heinrich von Puttkamer, thus climbing several rungs on the social ladder. The couple settled in Berlin-Grunewald and had a son in 1903, whom she by all accounts cared little for. Instead, she was extremely preoccupied with fashionable clothes, travelling, and later also morphine and cocaine. Her husband died in 1918 and was replaced by a Herr von Cramster as her companion. In conjunction with the Great Depression in the late 1920s, the baroness lost most of her wealth and was no longer able to maintain her extravagant lifestyle. She died under unclear circumstances in 1944, while admitted to a private clinic. Her poems were extremely upsetting to most critics, who labelled her 'shameless' and

'perverse', although some acknowledged that she all the same had genuine poetic talent. A couple of years after her debut, she expressed irritation at how people had understood her early poetry, most of which she wrote between the ages of fifteen and sixteen, as actual confessions. In fact, these verses were, she underscored, merely 'dream songs' written for her own amusement.[268] More interesting than her personal intentions, however, is that her works were widely read and that they combined Satanism with lesbianism in a seemingly defiant posture mocking intolerant conservatism.

Lillian Faderman points out the ambivalence in Marie Madeleine's poems: 'While her characters are tortured, poisoned, living in hell, they are also beautiful, and their way of life, their bold impertinent rejection of the bourgeois world, are incredibly exciting.' The novelty, she underscores, lies not in this ambiguity, which is familiar to us from texts like *Méphistophéla*, but that this is, perhaps, 'the first time a woman poet, who has presumably experienced love between women, writes this way and lends authority to a view whose basis was literary to begin with'.[269] Whether or not Marie Madeleine was actually lesbian herself is, however, not something we can say decisively from the sources available, though it seems highly likely, judging by her poems, that she was at least bisexual. A less plausible, but not impossible, theory is to see her merely as a calculating sensationalist who sought notoriety by writing of such themes in the first person. Of course, it is fully possible that she was a bit of both.

Whatever her motivations, and actual sexual orientation, as a female poet she was undoubtedly early, perhaps the first, to write from a lesbian first-person perspective. Her debut, the poetry collection *Auf Kypros* ('At Cyprus', 1900) narrowly preceded Vivien's first book. Foster suggests in passing that Vivien, who knew German well, might have read Marie Madeleine and been influenced by her.[270] I have not discerned any specific parallels between them that bear this idea out, but it is still conceivable. If nothing else, the writings of the baroness Puttkamer demonstrate again that the notion of lesbians as literally demonic was widespread at the time when Vivien wrote.

Auf Kypros does not quite as explicitly as Vivien blend Satanism with Sapphism in the same poems, but it contains both—in separate pieces—and some subtle blending of them can also be found. Satanic motifs are represented by 'Vom Stamme Lucifers' ('Of Lucifer's Lineage') and 'Lucifer'. The former could be read as a not-so-subtly coded lesbian poem. In a metaphorical narrative, it depicts two souls, 'once children of the sun', cast

out from heaven and now reduced to living among stupid 'everyday insects'. They encounter each other in this unrefined world, and in 'blissful torment' the two embrace and kiss. However,

> The small insects hissed
> with their poisonous tongues
> and lifted jeering heads
> and deemed it forbidden![271]

In a book of poetry that largely deals with women loving women, it does not seem a far-fetched interpretation to understand the two fallen angels, whose happiness is prohibited by the petty-minded crowd, as a symbol of lesbians, who thus become a sort of diabolical *Übermenschen* in opposition to the uncouth and intolerant multitude. The poem with the simple title 'Lucifer' is heterosexual, as the poetic speaker addresses (a masculine) Satan as her lover. She declares her hatred of the light of day and proclaims her longing for twilight, when her beloved, wings flapping, will take her in his arms.[272] Then she muses about his 'sinful pair of eyes' and 'thin lips' and finally pleads: 'Let me perish in thy arms, / my God and lover: Lucifer!'[273] Reviewers picked up on the Satanic content in her works, and the Austrian critic Fritz Mauthner (1849–1923) wrote about her: 'Marie Madeleine is a witch; she was at Blocksberg [the place where the witches gather in Goethe's *Faust*], she danced with all the devils, and she assures us, with less variation than what is pleasing for the rest of us to hear, that she is a witch.'[274]

Like Vivien, Marie Madeleine was fond of mythical femme fatales and wrote poems about, for example, Melusine ('Melusine', in *Die Rote Rose Leidenschaft*, 'The Red Rose of Passion', 1912).[275] Drugs also appear regularly in her writings, as in 'Kokaïn' ('Cocaine', in *Taumel*, 'Frenzy', 1920), a provocative litany to her beloved 'magic remedy', her 'fairy dust', her 'beloved salt'.[276] There are also several poems wallowing in the supposed depravity and sadism of lesbianism, for example, the salacious 'Crucifixa' (in *Auf Kypros*), where the poetic speaker recounts how she has crucified her female lover. Given that the entire book is dedicated to Félicien Rops (a telling fact considering the combination of Satanism and lesbianism), this piece may have been inspired by his infamous *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (1878), which depicts a naked woman on a cross (figure 7.11). In the

poem ‘Vagabunden’ (‘Vagabonds’, in *Auf Kypros*) the speaker says to the woman she loves:

> And hate and mockery surrounding us,
> and everyone condemning us, and all the preachers
> threatening us with punishment
> and Hell-fire, we are
> forever damned![277]

To Faderman, such poems represent an internalization of Decadent tropes, which makes it ‘inevitable that self-loathing and guilt would become common in the lives of women who continued to acknowledge their love of other women’.[278] I am not convinced that this necessarily holds true. Przybyszewski’s internalization of negative stereotypes surrounding the behaviour of Decadent authors did not leave him permanently in a self-imposed internal pillory of guilt and shame. In fact, he took considerable enjoyment in acting out narratives of sinfulness and Decadence. I find it hard to believe this would not have been true of some women as well. In the specific case of Marie Madeleine, we can also, as I have already suggested, assume she was not quite serious about her shocking depictions of lesbianism, as they were originally conceived as teenage provocations (and she may not even have been an actual lesbian). That this concept turned out to be highly commercially viable and she therefore kept it up is another matter.

It is often quite painfully obvious that Marie Madeleine, fond of rhyming for example ‘Schmerzen’ with ‘Herzen’, was not a poet that people read for her literary skill.[279] Nevertheless, read her they did, and her books sold in huge numbers. *Auf Kypros*, for instance, went through numerous printings, and the edition from 1921 that I have used here is one of the copies from the sixtieth to sixty-second thousand ones printed. Her lesbianism and Satanism are obviously calculated to shock, but with no particular rhetorical intention behind them. Where many of those employing a Satanic discourse had ulterior motives beyond mere sensationalism (with sensationalism itself serving an instrumental purpose), this appears not to be the case here. In comparison to Vivien, Marie Madeleine is less persistent in her use of pro-Satanic discourse, less original and rather more bluntly simplistic. Aside from celebrations of lesbianism, and expressions of hatred towards those who

refuse to tolerate it, there is slight feminist content in her works, and none of the misandry and gynocentricity so typical of Vivien.

CONCLUDING WORDS

A wide variety of texts from the early eighteenth century onwards connected lesbianism with witchcraft and the Devil. Lesbians could also be portrayed as members of a bizarre sexual sect, and quite often these two approaches were combined. Female homosexuality thus came to be conflated with Satanism. This association appeared not only in moralist works, but in publications like de Musset's pornographic 1833 *Gamiani* as well. A few decades later, Baudelaire and Swinburne produced poems that wavered between relentlessly demonizing lesbianism and glorifying it as a brave act of rebellion in defiance of a tyrannical God. The putatively lesbian German baroness Marie Madeleine paraded her amorous inclination alongside Satanism in several works. She probably combined them fully in her poem 'Vom Stamme Lucifers' (1900), which seems to be an allegorical representation of the plights of two female lovers persecuted by the common herd. Gay men also took up the motif of Satanic same-sex love, with, for example, Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen and his circle indulging in theatrical rituals of this sort. Fersen further presented a view of homosexuality as one of Satan's wonderful carnal blessings in his novel *Messes noires* (1905).

Catulle Mendès's *Méphistophéla*, published fifteen years earlier, made this link even more explicit and offered a grandiose and "sinful" heroine in the protagonist Sophor, whose desire for other women ultimately brings her little happiness. Yet, this novel displayed certain sarcasm towards bourgeois values and exhibited a lesbian subjectivity previously unheard of. Sophor is allowed to sermonize extensively, and quite convincingly, on the evils of heterosexual marriage and male oppression of women. *Méphistophéla* thus made the lesbian Satanic cult explicitly anti-patriarchal, something that is dramatically expressed in a Black Mass scene where the cut-off penises of young boys are sacrificed to a female demon. Medical discourse of the time used similarly religious metaphors to describe so-called 'inverts'. In short, those having this particular sexual orientation came to be talked of in various contexts—not only in fiction—as if though they constituted a sort of (Satanic) cult.

The poetess Renée Vivien appropriated this cluster of motifs in her writing. In accordance with the established tradition, she conceived of her love for other women as a sort of cult and framed it in a language overflowing with religious metaphors and motifs. The demoness Lilith plays a prominent part in Vivien's œuvre and is held up as a rebellious self-governing figure that is both similar to Satan (in her refusal to bow down to anyone) and intimately involved with him. Moreover, Vivien produced pieces in which she celebrates Satan as the God of femininity, or even the creator of woman, as well as a protector of homosexuals. She submits a Manichean vision of the universe where woman and everything coded as feminine is good and positive, and comes from Satan, whereas everything negative is masculine and created by God. It seems she sometimes envisioned Satan as a female figure in this context. Even poetry may be divided into two categories along these lines, with Sappho's hymns to beauty stemming from the Devil while Homer's epic depictions of war and violence were inspired by the male God. Yet, Vivien could also emphasize the unnatural 'perversity' of her leanings in love, thus conceding to male Decadents' ideas about it as something sinister and bizarre, but for this very reason particularly fascinating. Accordingly, she at times seems to paint the Sapphic as wicked and Satanic in a manner many scholars have found disturbing. It would be an oversimplification, however, to view this tendency as simply an internalization of negative stereotypes. A better option, I have argued, is to understand it as part of the ambiguities of the broader Decadent project, with its inversions that are only occasionally followed through to the end. Vivien, like Przybyszewski, seems an uncommonly consistent inverter and counter-reader, and we need to relate those instances that might appear one-sidedly demonizing to her reinvention of Satan elsewhere.

Vivien's 'La Genèse profane' (1902) draws directly on the style and structure of scripture, and in that sense represents an inversion and a direct subversion of the original Genesis text. As Decadent semantic inversions were wont to do, however, Vivien's poetry often reified stereotypical codings of gentleness, the moon, the night, witchcraft, and so on as feminine. In combination with her up-valuation and privileging of these traits, this appropriation can be considered a fairly logical response to misogynist stereotypes. Most present-day feminists would prefer a complete deconstruction of such notions, but this was not Vivien's choice. We are not dealing with, in Gayatri Spivak's term, strategic essentialism either. Spivak

suggests that feminists can, in a delimited context, embrace essentialist concepts in full awareness of their constructed nature, in order to use them for purely instrumental purposes.[280] By contrast, Vivien actually did believe there were universal feminine traits. As we have seen, her strongly Decadent sensibility made her enthusiastically embrace conceptualizations of her sexual minority as "demonic" per se. Vivien had read Mendès's *Méphistophéla* and described it as an eye-opener. Her ideas about a gynocentric Sapphic Satanism almost certainly came from this source. Mendès's novel, then, influenced her formulation of a poetic cosmology that rejected God and Christianity as extensions of patriarchy.

Clearly feminist ideas are expressed numerous times in Vivien's texts. For example, in her only novel she lets her fictional alter ego describe her anger at the oppression of women and describes men as political enemies. Regardless, she was never involved in any political struggle outside of her writing, and issues like women's suffrage do not seem to have meant much to her. Undoubtedly this has something to do with her upper-class elitist outlook, which made her aloof to the situation of the less wealthy and refined. The rich and sophisticated Decadent poet turned her alienation into a badge of honour, and accordingly chose a feminized Satan as one of the emblems of her feminist and unabashedly misandric outlook. This sinister symbol would have functioned as yet another way to signal a complete repudiation of the uncouth mass of humanity, males in particular, along with a refusal of patriarchal Christianity and its sacrament of marriage.

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1 From the author's new preface to the English edition (not in the original French edition), Wittig 1973/1975, p. ii.

2 Faderman 1981/1985, p. 239; Schultz 2008a, p. 93.

3 Quoted in Reynolds 2000, p. 126. For contextual information on this text, see pp. 125–126.

4 Herzig 2003, pp. 56–57. While witches were not perceived as a distinct "sect" of Devil-worshippers until the mid-fifteenth century and were not strongly tied to orgies in pre-sixteenth-century texts (though the *Malleus*—in a pioneering move—claims carnal lust was the key motivation for becoming a Satanist), the idea of marginalized religious groups holding orgies where all sorts of proscribed sexual acts—especially incest and homosexuality—took place was old. Such accusations had been levelled at, for example, Gnostics, Bogomils (the origin of the word *buggery*), the non-existent sect of 'Luciferians' condemned by Gregorius IX in 1233, Cathars, and even the Knights Templar. Faxneld 2006a, pp. 5–6, 10, 13, 15–19, 22, 51.

[5] Herzig 2003, pp. 61, 65, 67. Although Herzig mentions that most demonologists held witchcraft to be a crime primarily perpetrated by women, he does not discuss—since his focus is sodomy—if this meant that some demonological tracts would explicitly depict the sabbaths, attended mostly by women, as encompassing lesbian activity.

[6] Anonymous 1749, pp. 17–18.

[7] Donoghue 2010, pp. 116–119.

[8] Mosse 1985, p. 32.

[9] Waelti-Walters 2000, p. 19. The dating of the text to 1760 is from Josephs 1976, p. 735.

[10] Anonymous, n.d. [1784], p. 18: 'elle a un clitoris diabolique; elle sera plus propre aux femmes qu'aux hommes'. According to a footnote on p. 28 in the original edition of the novel, anandryne means 'anti-male' ('anti-homme'), but male-less would perhaps be a more exact rendering.

[11] Anonymous, n.d. [1784], p. 37.

[12] Donoghue 2010, p. 115.

[13] Alcide [Musset] n.d., p. 24: 'l'heure du sabbat' (here, *sabbat* clearly refers to the witches' sabbath).

[14] Ibid., p. 123: 'damnée sorcière'.

[15] Ibid., pp. 62–63: 'J'ai l'enfer dans l'esprit, j'ai le feu dans le corps.'

[16] Ibid., p. 66.

[17] Ibid., pp. 94–96. Quote on p. 94: 'Satan incarné'.

[18] Ibid., p. 99: 'la plus damnée tribale que l'enfer eût pu créer'.

[19] Donoghue 2010, p. 115.

[20] Ibid., p. 116.

[21] Baudelaire 1857/1950, pp. 174–175: 'religion'; 'culte'; 'Qui des Dieux osera, Lesbos, être ton juge'; 'Votre religion comme une autre est auguste, / Et l'amour se rira de l'Enfer et du Ciel!' ['une autre' would more exactly be translated as 'another', while 'any other', in the sense of 'all others', would be 'toute autre'; I have chosen to translate it this way anyhow, as it is clearly what is intended by Baudelaire].

[22] Ibid., pp. 176–179: Quote on p. 179: 'Descendez, descendez, lamentables victimes, / Descendez le chemin de l'enfer éternel!'

[23] Ibid., p. 136: 'Ô vierges, ô démons, ô monstres, ô martyres, / De la réalité grands esprits contempteurs, / Chercheuses d'infini, dévotes et satyres'; 'Vous que dans votre enfer mon âme a poursuivies, / Pauvres sœurs, je vous aime autant que je vous plains'. 'Damned Women' could also be translated as 'Doomed Women'.

[24] Faderman 1981/1985, p. 271.

[25] Abraham 2009, p. 10.

[26] Gibson 1996/2006, pp. 106–107; Millman 1992, p. 69.

[27] Wood 2000, pp. 60–61, 73.

[28] Jumeau-Lafond 1994, pp. 74–99, illustrations on pp. 77, 88, 89.

[29] On Swinburne and Baudelaire, see Sieburth 1984. Swinburne also worked on an ambitious novel about a lesbian woman, but it was never finished and did not reach publication until 1952, under the title *Lesbia Brandon*. Foster 1956/1985, pp. 78–79.

[30] Swinburne 2000, pp. 163–165.

[31] Ibid., p. 86.

[32] Ibid., p. 87.

[33] Ibid., p. 89.

[34] Ibid., p. 90.

[35] Ibid., p. 50: 'Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed / To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast! / Ah that my mouth for Muses milk were fed / On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled! / . . . That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat / Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet / Thy body were abolished and consumed, / And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!'

[36] Ibid., p. 52. Further attacks on God can be found, for example, on p. 54. There are also references to lesbianism in other poems in the same volume, for instance, 'The Masque of Queen Bersabe' (pp. 184–185), one of the seventeen poems introduced in a later edition of *Poems and Ballads*, and 'Satia Te Sanguine', where Sappho is mentioned in conjunction with imagery such as 'A sterile, ruinous blossom' (pp. 70–71; quote on p. 70).

[37] Huysmans 2001, p. 221. Original: 'tombé dans un repaire de sodomites' (Huysmans 1891, p. 256). The declamation during the mass further announces that Satan is the instigator of male prostitution (p. 225).

[38] Vicinus 1999, p. 93.

[39] Somewhat later, in the early twentieth century, we find in Aleister Crowley a connection between Pan and ritual anal sex between men. For example, in one of the murals in Crowley's Abbey of Thelema in Sicily (in operation 1920–23), a man is anally penetrated by Pan while he himself ejaculates on the body of the Scarlet Woman (Conner, Sparks, & Sparks 1997, p. 116; Conner 1993, pp. 211–213). Pan was also popular with some lesbians, for instance, Katherine Bradley and Emma Cooper (who around the turn of the century wrote ecstatic poems to Pan under the pseudonym Michael Field). Vicinus 1999, p. 93.

[40] Johnson 1953, pp. 65–67. Quote on p. 66.

[41] Conner, Sparks, & Sparks 1997, p. 59.

[42] Ibid., p. 285; Conner 1993, p. 204.

[43] Carpenter 1918, pp. 358–364 (for the fascination with Satan's beauty, see p. 363; for what seems like a defence of homosexual love, see pp. 360, 362). On this aspect of Carpenter's writing, see Conner, Sparks, & Sparks 1997, pp. 105–106. Carpenter supposedly also inspired the homoerotic esoteric rituals of Aleister Crowley and Victor Neuburg. A later example of the poetic association between Satan and male homosexuality, in a not clearly negative framework, can be found in several poems by Federico García Lorca (1898–1936). Conner, Sparks, & Sparks 1997, p. 296.

[44] Reed 2005, pp. i–vi. Jean Lorrain was among those who claimed to have witnessed one of these gatherings. After serving his sentence, Fersen (who, if some of the stories told about him are true, should probably be understood as a paedophile, even if it remains unclear whether he was celibate or not) withdrew to Capri, where he continued indulging in his taste for ritualized homosexuality, for example, by devising a lavish ritual (involving whipping) where his young Italian lover was elevated to the status of a 'soldier of Mithras'. He also smoked copious amounts of opium in his opulent Villa Lysis, wrote a book on his experiences with this drug and edited an ambitious literary journal with

homosexual content. According to legend (which may very well be true in this case), Fersen killed himself in 1923 by drinking a glass of champagne containing a large overdose of cocaine.

[45] Fersen 2005, pp. 131, 132. I quote from the English translation by Jeremy Reed.

[46] Ibid., pp. 134–136. Quote on p. 134. Lyllian's ideal Satanism would have involved 'romantic lairs at the bottom of which alchemists, discouraged by their search for the Philosopher's Stone, were amusing themselves by roasting toads and dead children in their furnace' (p. 134).

[47] Ibid., pp. 151–153. Quote on p. 153.

[48] Ibid., p. 169.

[49] Casselaer 1986, p. 106.

[50] Ibid., p. 115.

[51] Schultz 2008b, p. 179.

[52] Dade 2009, p. 21; Faderman 1981/1985, p. 281.

[53] Maupassant 1974, pp. 291–308. For a discussion of this text, see Waelti-Walters 2000, pp. 40–46.

[54] Cf. Johnsson 2000, p. 58. For a more negative evaluation, see Faderman 1981/1985, p. 274.

[55] Chevalier 1893, pp. 227–228: 'les prêtresses du nouveau culte sont devenues légion'.

[56] Faderman 1981/1985, p. 250.

[57] On Péladan, see Pincus-Witten 1976. The word *gynandryne* does not exist in the English language, and I have constructed this neologism in accordance with the similarly Greek-derived *androgyne* (Péladan's own term has been put together by reversing the order of the two Greek words compounded to form the term *androgyne*). *Gynandrian* would be another option.

[58] Foster 1956/1985, pp. 104–108; Dade 2009, p. 29.

[59] Foster 1956/1985, pp. 201–202.

[60] Luijk 2013, pp. 329–330. Luijk bases his account on a small brochure produced by the theatre where *Les Messes noires* was staged. The probable connection to d'Adelswärd-Fersen seems to have passed him by, and the homosexual nobleman is not mentioned elsewhere in his otherwise impressively comprehensive study either. For several further examples of the 'ritualization' and 'cultification' of lesbianism, see Albert 1993, pp. 93–96.

[61] Mendès 1890, pp. 74–75.

[62] E.g. ibid., p. 568.

[63] Ibid., pp. 36–38.

[64] Cf. Musset, pp. 26–27; Huysmans 2001, p. 227; Mendès 1890, pp. 22–23.

[65] It is interesting to note that the discussion of witchcraft, morphine addiction, and delusions of grandeur as somehow related in Paul Régnard's *Les Maladies épidémiques de l'esprit: Sorcellerie, magnétisme, morphinisme, délire des grandeurs* ('Epidemic Illnesses of the Mind: Witchcraft, Magnetism, Morphinism, Delusions of Grandeur'), published three years prior to *Méphistophéla*—is clearly reflected in Mendès's portrayal of Sophor d'Hermelinge. There is also a rationalist doctor in the novel, whose pontificating obviously draws on the views of Charcot, Régnard, and their colleagues.

[66] Mendès 1890, pp. 53–54. In their adolescence, Emmeline and Sophie build primitive altars to the Virgin Mary, emphasizing the odd religious tone that is a key component throughout the tale. The protagonist's fascination with Christianity is, however, linked to vague ideas about Christ as a

propagator of same-sex couples (not in a sexual sense), and later she begins to see herself as a defier of God (pp. 45–48).

[67] Ibid., pp. 501–504.

[68] Ibid., p. 552.

[69] Ibid., p. 567: 'atavique fatalité', 'exemplaire lamentable de la Névrose ou de la Possession'.

[70] Palacio 1993, p. 16. Cf. Heine 1952, p. 42, and *passim*.

[71] Hanson 1970, pp. 20, 22.

[72] Praz 1933/1960, pp. 169, 363.

[73] Helsby 1979, pp. 1–4.

[74] Carter 1958, p. 95.

[75] Helsby 1979, pp. 33–34, 116.

[76] Ibid., p. 114.

[77] Quoted in Lucey 2006, p. 269.

[78] Thompson 1900, p. 75. Irish author George Moore, who met Mendès in the 1870s, wrote of 'his fragile face illuminated with the idealism of a depraved woman'. Moore 1889/1972, p. 84.

[79] Hanson 1970, p. 32; Helsby 1979, pp. 24, 152. The idea of Mendès as the wickedest man in Paris seems to be derived from Thompson's poem, written in 1900, and might—of course—not be a historically accurate representation of how he was perceived in his youth. Thompson 1900, p. 75.

[80] Helsby 1979, pp. 139, 142.

[81] Mendès 1876, pp. 42–44, 155–160.

[82] Berberi 2003, pp. 83–84, 87.

[83] Martin 1940, pp. 21–22.

[84] Uzzel 2006, p. 15.

[85] In Mendès 1993, p. 582: 'la conception d'un poète délicat et charmant, le rêve d'un maître artiste, subtil et raffiné'.

[86] Ibid., p. 583: 'le pharisaïsme des lecteurs bourgeois ne saurait rien trouver à reprendre contre la moralité de ce beau livre'.

[87] Ibid., pp. 577, 578: 'l'un des premiers écrivains de notre temps'; 'son œuvre capitale de prosateur'.

[88] Ibid., pp. 579, 580: 'transgresseur de lois de la vie, lois divines ou lois de nature'; 'pour l'émerveillement de nos yeux, pour les délices de notre oreille, qu'il laisse couler les magnificences de son romantisme, en des pages possédeées, disant la messe blasphématrice du viril amour'.

[89] Hichens 1894/1949, p. 50. It also puts in an appearance in Colette's Claudine novels. Lucey 2006, p. 80.

[90] Foster 1956/1985, p. 15; Grier 1967/1981, pp. 106–107. Virginia Elwood-Akers (in 2002, p. 149) gives the same figures as Foster and repeats her claims about an English translation. Aside from these scholars, who all seem to ultimately rely on Foster, I have seen no one mention its existence, at the time of its supposed publication or later.

[91] Finn 2005, pp. 82–83.

[92] Lorrain 1891, p. 1: ‘Mizy, devenue depuis la *Méphistoféla* [*sic*] de Mendès’. For more on how Sophor is supposedly modelled on Mathilde de Morny, see Lucey 2006, pp. 118–120.

[93] Ellis [1897]/1915, p. 200.

[94] Faderman 1981/1985, p. 254.

[95] Mendès 1890, p. 383: ‘Ce sont les bourgeois qui ont raison’; ‘Ils vivent tranquilles, ils meurent tranquilles’.

[96] Ibid., p. 386: ‘Ce doit être lui qui a imaginé, pour nous perdre et pour agacer le bon Dieu, de faire se caresser les femmes.’

[97] Ibid., p. 12: ‘c’est un morne démon ou une morne démone—car pourquoi les tentateurs n’auraient-ils pas l’un ou l’autre sexe, plus brutaux d’être máles, plus sournois et plus insinuants d’être femelles?—qui tient la baronne Sophor d’Hermelinge’.

[98] Ibid., p. 18: ‘l’immonde gloire et l’orgueil sans doute de l’incomparable péché’.

[99] Ibid., p. 392: ‘C’était sale, les fleurissantes lèvres des femmes, et la fraîcheur des seins nus? sale, l’étreinte des beaux bras lavés d’eaux odorantes, et recélant, en de vivantes cassolettes, des parfums aussi fervents que l’encens des autels et les myrrhes du tabernacle? Ce qui est immonde en effet, c’est le rut de l’homme, le brutal et bestial hymen, avec des acharnements qui suent, avec des achèvements où le désir s’écœure; et puisque l’embrassade virile a pour fin les ordures de la fécondité, les nuits conjugales sont l’exécrable épouvante du pur rêve d’aimer.’

[100] Ibid., p. 395: ‘Et s’il y avait quelque chose de défendu, si le désir n’impliquait toujours la légitimité de la réalisation, est-ce qu’il n’y aurait pas une grandeur à se rebeller contre l’interdiction? … Enfreindre la loi et braver le châtiment, c’est l’emporter sur le juge. Dire non à Dieu, c’est devenir une espèce de Dieu. L’être qui se fait différent de ce qu’il devait être, se recrée, s’égale au créateur … la femme éprise de la femme, c’est une nouvelle règle, plus superbe d’avoir vaincu l’autre.’

[101] Ibid., p. 397: ‘mais de quel glorieux, de quel délicieux démon! un Lucifer, héroïque comme une Penthésilée et subtil comme une Parisienne, conseillant toutes les audaces et enseignant tous les stratagèmes. Il était formidable et délicat ! une sorte de Dieu qui, d’être femme, serait diable. … Et c’était de lui qu’elle tenait la superbe de ne pas baisser les regards sous les regards chargés de mépris et de haine, ou de porter l’opprobre comme un rayonnant diadème.’

[102] Ibid., p. 349: ‘Et, plus encore que la joie des possessions, la fierté l’en enchantait! Violatrice impunie des lois naturelles ou des desseins de la divinité, elle avait, en des fièvres délirantes, la suprême arrogance d’un Lucifer qui, un instant, aurait vaincu Dieu.’

[103] Ibid., p. 517.

[104] Ibid., p. 195: ‘culte’; ‘mystérieux rites’; ‘était l’oblaie instinctive’.

[105] Ibid., p. 400: ‘délicieux et formidable sabbat où la multitude des belles sorcières et des possédées dit la messe blasphématrice du viril amour’.

[106] Ibid., pp. 402–403: ‘Toi qui te réjouis des solitudes nocturnes peuplées de songes et d’invisibles caresses! Toi qui hais l’hymen et le bafoues! … Ennemie des noces, malédictrice des lits féconds, à qui plaisent les ventres lisses et les gorges sans rides, Démone exquise et formidable, notre recours et notre épouvante, apparais sur l’autel, Démone’ [‘malédictrice’ seems to be a neologism].

[107] Ibid., pp. 404–405: ‘noire, rouge et dorée’, ‘satan femelle d’une sabbat sans hommes’.

[108] Palacio 1993, p. 20.

[109] Mendès 1890, p. 405: ‘aux adorations son sexe fauve pareil à un ostensoir!’

[110] Ibid., p. 405: ‘Sois propice, ineffable Maîtresse, à celles qui méprisent les couches conjugales et qui maudissent les berceaux!’

[111] Ibid., p. 407.

[112] Ibid., p. 409: ‘pleine de la Démone possédée, elle se sentait la devenir. Noire, rouge et dorée, c’était elle qui se dressait, diabolique et céleste, prodigieuse’ [this could also be read as ‘the possessed demoness’—the verb is in past participle—but more likely indicates the demoness that she holds within herself, i.e. possesses not in the demonological sense, but indicating ownership].

[113] Ibid., p. 409: ‘toute la ville, et toutes les campagnes, et les fleuves, et les monts, et les continents lointains apparurent tels que Lucifer les verrait de la hauteur de son astre’.

[114] Ibid., p. 410: ‘plein de remous de feux et de ténèbres, et, à l’emportement des femmes ruées en troupeaux, il s’offrait comme une entrée vertigineuse de gouffre’.

[115] Ziegler 2002, p. 16.

[116] Spackman 1998, p. 818. Gretchen Schultz similarly sees Mendès’s novel as an example of a type of text that combines ‘voyeuristic surveillance and pre-emptive punishment’ (Schultz 2008b, p. 186).

[117] E.g. Spackman 1998; Palacio 1993.

[118] Spackman 1998, pp. 816–818. Quote on p. 816.

[119] Palacio 1993, p. 25: ‘grandeur dans le crime’.

[120] Hanson 1970, p. 55. For a somewhat different view, which understands him as preoccupied with elevating the masses and developing their tastes, see Helsby 1979, p. 29.

[121] Mendès 1890, pp. 541–542: ‘Pour les jeunes filles, tous les livres sont mauvais, même les plus chastes, parce qu’ils suscitent en ces jeunes âmes le souci de l’inconnu, de l’irréel’; ‘les mauvais anges, les esprit tentateurs planent dans le vague des sons; c’est le mystérieux battement de leurs ailes qui rythme les mélodies’. See also Mendès 1890, p. 133.

[122] Ziegler 2002, p. 90.

[123] Constable 1997, p. 80.

[124] Berberi 2003, p. 89.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., p. 110.

[127] Ibid., pp. 129–130.

[128] Palacio 1993, p. 24.

[129] Waelti-Walters 2000, p. 60.

[130] Cryle 2001, p. 226.

[131] Ibid., p. 355.

[132] Ibid., p. 334.

[133] Mendès 1890, p. 490: ‘Non, elle se révoltait, méprisait, répudiait ces lâches pensées. Elle ne consentirait jamais à cesser d’être elle-même!’

[134] Ibid., p. 520: ‘cessait de railler les bonnes gens simples qui vivent en famille’; ‘Elle avait eu tort d’être extraordinaire, différente des autres femmes’.

[135] Ibid., p. 10: ‘l’impératrice blême d’une macabre Lesbos’.

[136] Ibid., pp. 10, 344.

[137] Donoghue 2010, p. 166.

[138] Ibid., p. 165; Foster 1956/1985, p. 103.

[139] We can compare it with Waelti-Walters's words about male-authored fiction about lesbianism from the period: '[I]f the writers' primary purpose is to discredit the way of life about which they are writing, then they cannot allow readers to engage with the characters in any way, in case the said readers might find the characters sympathetic' (Waelti-Walters 2000, p. 54). This general rule rather clearly does not apply to Mendès's handling of Sophor.

[140] Schultz 2008a, p. 92.

[141] Mendès 1890, p. 258: 'du révolté qui ne baisse pas les yeux', 's'enorgueillissait d'être singulière et détestable'.

[142] Ibid., p. 350: 'défier l'hypocrisie ou l'honnêteté sociale'.

[143] Engelking 2002, p. 365. Praz also discusses Swinburne's influence on Vivien briefly. Praz 1933/1960, p. 410.

[144] Engelking 1993, p. 80.

[145] On the speculations concerning Sand's sexual preferences, see Faderman 1981/1985, p. 263. The rumours of her being the model for the evil lesbian in *Gamiani*, discussed earlier in this chapter, must of course also be kept in mind.

[146] Manning 1981, pp. 3–5.

[147] Jay 1988, pp. 6–7.

[148] Manning 1981, pp. 8–10.

[149] Dade 2009, p. 30; Wickes 1976, p. 44.

[150] Manning 1981, pp. 14, 17; Engelking 1992–93, p. 138.

[151] Engelking 1993, p. 80.

[152] Marks 1988, p. 176.

[153] Gubar 1984, p. 50; Engelking 2002, pp. 366–368.

[154] My translation; original quoted in Manning 1981, p. 145: 'vous êtes poète, c'est à dire, au dessus de la masse des hommes'.

[155] Engelking 1992–93, p. 133.

[156] Colette 1932/1968, pp. 87–88. I quote from the English translation by Herma Briffault. Original: 'Hormis quelques Bouddhas géants, tous les meubles bougeaient mystérieusement, provoquaient un temps la surprise et l'admiration, puis s'en allaient. … Parmi des merveilles instables, voilée, mieux que vêtue, de noir ou de violet, à travers la nuit odorante des salons barricadés de vitraux, dans un air épaissi de rideaux, de fumées d'encens, Renée errait' (Colette 1949, p. 67).

[157] Colette 1932/1968, p. 90. Original: 'nausée de tant de parfums funèbres', 'voulus ouvrir une fenêtre: la fenêtre était clouée' (Colette 1949, p. 70).

[158] Colette 1932/1968, pp. 87–87; Colette 1949, pp. 66–67.

[159] Colette 1932/1968, pp. 88–90, 94–96; Colette 1949, pp. 68–69, 77.

[160] Manning 1981, p. 27; Brofman 2007, p. 134.

[161] Barney [1929]/1992, p. 187. I quote from John Spalding Gatton's English translation. Original: 'elle fut la prêtresse de la mort, et la mort fut son dernier chef-d'oeuvre'; 'Ce ne fut pas un suicide: ceux qui aiment la vie se tuent, ceux qui aiment la mort se laissent mourir' (Barney 1929, p. 256).

[162] Barney [1929]/1992, pp. 186, 187. Original: 'l'évolution d'une mystique' [italics from original removed]; 'Aucun n'apporta plus de mysticisme dans sa sensualité, plus de sensualité dans ses élans mystiques, que Renée Vivien' (Barney 1929, pp. 254, 257).

[163] Barney [1929]/1992, p. 188. Original: 'aboutir inévitablement à la religion la plus capable de satisfaire son être toujours avide de pompes et d'images, et ce coeur depuis longtemps épuisé devant l'autel des charnelles idoles' (Barney 1929, p. 258).

[164] Barney [1929]/1992, p. 188. Original: 'qu'un poète de plus, à bout de souffrance et de lassitude, accepta, en vue d'une éternité possible, ce dernier aspect de la sensualité: le catholicisme' (Barney 1929, p. 258). She also writes: 'There is nothing mysterious or contradictory in the fact that almost all great sensualists finally come to the foot of a cross whose pressure and obsession they had already experienced.' Barney [1929]/1992, p. 188. Original: 'Il n'y a rien de mystérieux ni de contradictoire dans le fait que presque tous les grands sensuels viennent finir au pied d'une croix dont ils avaient déja éprouvé l'accablement et la hantise' (Barney 1929, p. 257). Colette, too, comments (somewhat more cynically) on Vivien's last-minute conversion (Colette 1932/1968, pp. 101–102).

[165] Vivien 1904b, pp. 3–4.

[166] Vivien 1904c, pp. 180–181.

[167] Brofman 2007, p. 104.

[168] Vivien 1906, p. 7: 'Si le Seigneur penchait son front sur mon trépas, / Je lui dirais: 'O Christ, je ne te connais pas.' // 'Seigneur, ta stricte loi ne fut jamai la mienne, / Et je vécus ainsi qu'une simple païenne'.

[169] Ibid., p. 8: 'Et j'aimai cette femme, au mépris de tes lois.'

[170] Ibid., pp. 9–10: 'J'écouterais très mal les cantiques des anges, / Pour avoir entendu jadis des chants étranges, // Les chants de ce Lesbos don't les chœurs se sont tus … / Et je ne saurais point célébrer tes virtues'; 'Je n'ai jamais tenté de révolte farouche: / Le baiser fut le seul blasphème de ma bouche'.

[171] Vivien 1904c, p. 6: 'Je connus la stupeur d'un acolyte ivre de parfums sacrés.' In Liane de Pougy's *Idylle Saphique* (1901), Natalie Barney is quoted as calling lesbianism 'a religion of the body, whose kisses are prayers' (Pougy 1901, p. 277).

[172] Vivien 1904c, p. 136: 'Madone perverse des chapelles profanes'.

[173] Ibid., p. 158: '[J]'ai exalté l'amour des nobles harmonies et de la beauté féminine jusqu'à la Foi. Toute croyance qui inspire l'ardeur et le sacrifice est une religion veritable.'

[174] Kirsch 1990, p. 16. Defining this community, she draws on Victor Turner's classic concept of 'communitas' (pp. 23–24).

[175] Ibid., p. 118.

[176] Colette 1932/1968, p. 90. At one point, she decided she would buy a new Buddha every day (p. 96). The apples perhaps signified the fruits that were supposedly exchanged as tokens of love between women in rituals in the circle around Sappho. For this reason, nineteenth-century lesbian poets had come to use apples with the same symbolical meaning (these rituals, and the later use of this symbolism among lesbians, are mentioned in Conner, Sparks, & Sparks 1997, p. 65). Potentially, Vivien's offerings of apples could also have signified the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. This, of course, is mere speculation, but it seems quite possible in light of her Satanic leanings and the fact that

a parallel between lesbianism and the Edenic forbidden fruit is present in *Méphistophéla*. A more straightforward explanation would be that she was simply mimicking the Buddhist practice of offering fresh fruit to such statues (which she could have observed during her journeys to Japan in 1906 and 1907), either seriously or as a fun game.

177 Vivien 1902, pp. 115–118: 'I.—Avant la naissance de l'Univers, existaient deux principes éternels, Jéhovah et Satan. / II.—Jéhovah incarnait la Force, Satan la Ruse. / III.—Or, les deux grands principes se haïssaient d'une haine profonde. / IV.—En ce temps-là, régnait le Chaos. / V.—Jéhovah dit: 'Que la lumière soit'.—Et la lumière fut. / VI.—Et Satan créa le mystère de la nuit. / VII.—Jéhovah souffla sur l'immensité et son haleine fît éclore le Ciel. / VIII.—Satan couvrit l'implacable azur de la grâce fuyante des nuages. / IX.—Des mains laborieuses de Jéhovah surgit le printemps. / X.—Satan rêva la mélancolie de l'automne. / XI.—Jéhovah conçut les formes robustes ou sveltes des animaux. / XII.—Sous le furtif sourire de Satan, jaillirent les fleurs. / XIII.—Jéhovah pétrit de l'argile. Et, de cette argile, il fit l'homme. / XIV.—De l'essence même de cette chair fleurit, idéalisée, la chair de la Femme, œuvre de Satan. / XV.—Jéhovah courba l'homme et la femme sous la violence et l'étreinte. / XVI.—Satan leur apprit la subtilité aiguë de la caresse. / XVII.—Jéhovah forma de son haleine l'âme d'un Poète. / XVIII.—Il inspira l'Aède d'Ionie, le puissant Homère. / XIX.—Homère célébra la magnificence du carnage et la gloire du sang versé, la ruine des villes, les sanglots des veuves, les flammes dévastatrices, l'éclair des épées et le choc des combats. / XX.—Satan s'inclina, vers le couchant, sur le repos de Psapphâ, la Lesbienne. / XXI.—Et elle chanta les formes fugitives de l'amour, les pâleurs et les extases, le déroulement magnifique des chevelures, le brûlant parfum des roses, l'arc-en-ciel, trône de l'Aphroditâ, l'amertume et la douceur de l'Erôs, les danses sacrées des femmes de la Crète autour de l'autel illuminé d'étoiles, le sommeil solitaire tandis que sombrent dans la nuit la lune et les Pléiades, l'immortel orgueil qui méprise la douleur et sourit dans la mort et le charme des baisers féminins rythmés par le flux assourdi de la mer expirant sous les murs voluptueux de Mitylène' [Mitylene is a town on Lesbos].

178 Vivien 1904c, p. 18: 'Tout ce qui est laid, injuste, féroce et lâche, émane du Principe Mâle. Tout ce qui est douloureusement beau et désirable émane du Principe Femelle. … Les deux Principes sont également puissants, et se haïssent d'une haine inextinguible.'

179 Jay 1988, pp. 73–74.

180 San Giovanni, in *Une Femme m'apparut* (Vivien 1904c, p. 55), however does speak of restoring the primitive cult of the Mother Goddess.

181 Manning 1981, p. 72.

182 Vivien 1904b, p. 28: 'le troupeau stupide des familles'.

183 Ibid., p. 55: 'Quittons la léthargie heureuse des maisons, / Le carmin des rosiers et le parfum des pommes'; 'Car nous ne sommes plus de la race des hommes'.

184 Ibid., p. 56: 'les Banshees qui présagent les deuils'.

185 Vivien 1904c, pp. 76–77: 'Être lue en enfer: quel succès! Cela me dédommagera de la vente restreinte de mes volumes ici-bas'; 'La justice, (. . .) lasse de vagabonder vainement sur la sphère terrestre, s'est réfugiée en enfer. Car la justice est l'unique vertu des Démons'.

186 Vivien 1904b, p. 60: 'Une étrange et pâle prêtresse, / Délaissant l'autel de Vénus, / Apporte à la Bonne Déesse / Les daturas et les lotus. // Car la blonde enlace la brune, / Et les servantes d'Ashtaroth, / Aux vêtements de clair de lune, / Te narguent, Deus Sabaoth. // Les nonnes et les courtisanes, / Mêlant la belladone au lys, / Chantent les *Te Deum* profanes / Et les joyeux *De Profundis*' [the 'Bonne Déesse' is probably the Roman Bona Dea, a goddess worshipped primarily by women].

[187] On Ashtaroth and Ashtoreth, see Medway 2001, p. 54; Russell 1984/1986, p. 248.

[188] Deus, of course, means *God* (not necessarily with a capital *G*) in Latin, while the latter word is Hebrew for *host* or *army* and is, among other things, used to designate the heavenly hosts.

[189] On belladona as a witches' plant, see Schultes & Hofmann, 1979/1992, pp. 68–69, 86–90.

[190] Vivien 1904b, pp. 68–69: 'Archange ennemi des naissances, / Bélial Sur les ventres féconds trace le nombre: treize. // Ashtaroth, Belzébuth, Moloch et Bélial / Sur les ventres gonflés tracent le nombre: treize. // … Car Bélial, Moloch, Belzébuth, Ashtaroth / Font triompher Sodome et claironner Gomorrhe'.

[191] Käppeli 1993/1995, p. 484. We should note, however, that most feminists at this time were of a partly conservative, "maternal" bent (p. 499).

[192] Vivien 1906, p. 78: 'cœur sombre'; 'pauvre et triste'; 'Mais moi qui hais la foule à l'entour des autels, / Moi qui raille l'espoir cupide des prières, / Je te consacre, ò le plus doux des Immortels, / Ce chant pieux fleuri sur mes lèvres amères'.

[193] Sanders 1991, pp. 360–361. For a quantitative inventory of religious motifs employed by Vivien, see pp. 387–390. A rather unexpected poem in *À l'heure des main jointes* is dedicated to Odin, and in it she declares herself a daughter of Odin's 'venerable poets' (Vivien 1906, pp. 155–157).

[194] Vivien 1906, p. 121.

[195] Vivien 1904c, pp. 48–49; as a symbol of wisdom, p. 10.

[196] Wickes 1976, p. 102.

[197] Vivien 1904c, p. 40: 'L'Art Nouveau le plus ambigu'.

[198] Vicinus 1999, p. 92. It is interesting to note that Eve, perhaps too meek for Vivien's taste, is not a prominent figure in her biblical reworkings. In fact, as we shall see, Eve is completely omitted from the tales in her new versions of Genesis, in some instances being replaced by Lilith.

[199] Conway [1878]/1880, p. 100.

[200] Vivien 1904b, p. 140.

[201] Vivien 1903b, p. 3: 'souffle de l'aurore'.

[202] Ibid., p. 4: 'trouva d'essence grossière et inférieure à elle-même'.

[203] Sura 7 (Al-A'raf), ayat 11–12.

[204] Vivien 1903b, pp. 4, 5: 'Amant mystique'; 'Je ne concevrai pas et je n'enfanterai pas sous l'ardeur de ton étreinte. Mais nos rêves peupleront la terre, et nos chimères s'incarneront dans l'Avenir'[quotation marks and line break removed from original].

[205] Ibid., p. 5: 'naquirent les songes pervers, les parfums malfaisants, les poisons de révolte et de luxure qui hantent l'esprit des hommes et rendent leur âme semblable à l'âme dangereuse et triste des Anges du Mal'.

[206] Vivien 1905, p. 133: 'une passion hors nature'.

[207] Vivien 1904c, p. 162: 'J'ai peine à concevoir une telle déviation des sens. Le sadisme et le viol des petits enfants me paraissent infiniment plus normaux.'

[208] Manning 1981, p. 77.

[209] Since his poems had become well-known among the literary avant-garde by the 1890s, it could also be an allusion to Blake's drastic words in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790–93): 'Sooner

murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires' (Blake 2008, p. 38).

210 Vivien 1904b, pp. 139–140: 'Nous haïssons la face agressive des mâles'; 'Notre rébellion se répercute et gronde'; 'Le souffle ténébreux de Lilith est en nous, / Et le baiser d'Éblis nous fut terrible et doux' [the exact significance of the kiss with Eblis is obscure, since 'terrible' in French can mean both terrible/dreadful or tremendous. Quite possibly this doubleness is intentional on Vivien's part]; 'Nous renierons les pleurs mystiques de jadis / Et l'expiation des cierges et des lys'.

211 Hartnup 2004, pp. 85–86.

212 Vivien 1903a, pp. 69–70: 'Elle hait le désir qui profane l'Epouse, / Elle erre dans la nuit, inquiète et jalouse. / . . . Tu ne connaîtras point les effrois de l'Épouse, / O vierge! car voici Gellô pâle et jalouse'; 'Bacchante de la Mort'; 'printemps sans été'.

213 Vivien 1904a, pp. 143–144: 'depuis la rébellion de Lilith, je suis la première femme libre'.

214 Ibid., p. 135: 'Lilith, dédaigneuse de l'amour de l'homme, préféra l'enlacement du Serpent'.

215 Ibid., p. 136: 'J'aime les vaincus … tous ceux que tente l'Impossible'.

216 The eleven figures also include, for example, Cleopatra and Lady Jane Grey.

217 Vivien 1903a, p. 73: 'D'ombres et de démons je peuplai l'univers. / Avant Ève, je fus la lumière du monde / Et j'aimai le Serpent tentateur et pervers. / Je conçus l'Irréel dans mon âme profonde. / La Terre s'inclina devant ma royauté'.

218 Ibid.: 'L'astre fatal de la Beauté. / Je ne fus pas heureuse'.

219 Jay 1988, p. 39.

220 Vivien 1908, pp. 96–97: 'âmes calmes et noires'; 'le droit d'être'; 'L'on sait que c'est un tort grave d'être anormal, / Leur cœur inoffensif n'a point conçu le mal. // Mais ces femmes sont les maudites étrangères'.

221 Ibid., p. 98: 'Elles savent cacher au dur regard du jour / Leur cœur, leur haine triste et leur si triste amour'.

222 For further examples, see chapter 11.

223 Vivien 1904b, pp. 77–78.

224 Vivien 1903a, pp. 65–67; Vivien 1903b, pp. 93–94, quote on p. 94: 'néant de la pensée'.

225 Vivien 1906, p. 90: 'Son pouvoir féminin s'insinue à la brune: / Elle devient irrésistible au clair de lune. // Des pâtres ont cru voir, de leurs yeux ingénus, / Des serpents verts glisser le long de ses bras nus. // A minuit, la plus belle étoile la couronne; / Parfois, elle est cruelle et parfois elle est bonne'.

226 Mendès 1890, p. 160: 'bafouait l'hymen', 'des époux et des amants'.

227 For example, Gretchen Schultz emphasizes Baudelaire's influence on Vivien (Schultz 2008a, p. 102).

228 Vivien 1904c, p. 59: 'La lecture de *Méphistophéla* m'ouvrit des jardins insoupçonnés et le chemin d'étoiles inconnues. J'adorais ce livre, malgré le mauvais goût de certains chapitres, où la morale bourgeoise épouse en justes noces le mélodrame populaire. Je compris dès lors que les lèvres incertaines pouvaient s'unir sans dégoût à d'autres lèvres, plus savantes mais non moins timides. Je compris qu'il fleurissait sur la terre de féeriques baisers sans regret et sans remords.'

229 Vivien 1909, p. 27: 'Toi qui hante mes nuits cruelles, ô Démon! // … Tu règnes sur mon cœur implacable et suprême!'

230 Vivien 1909, p. 28: 'Les peuples sont petits et laids. Allons loin d'eux, / De leurs propos mesquins, de leurs cœurs infidèles. / Envolons-nous au bruit puissant des larges ailes / Que tu sais déployer dans le

vent orageux!'

231 Schultz 2008a, p. 101. There are indications, however, that Louÿs had a considerable female readership from the very outset, or at least that this was part of his intended target audience. Cf. Johnsson 2000, pp. 327–328.

232 Manning 1981, p. 19; Brofman 2007, pp. 26–27. Journalists and readers were thus led to believe that the author of *Études et préludes* (1901), *Cendres et poussières* (1902), and *Brumes de fjords* (1902) was a man.

233 Brofman 2007, pp. 28–29. Quote on p. 29: 'un genre dépravé et d'une psychologie maladive' (my translation).

234 Ibid., p. 30. See also pp. 158–159 for a nuancing of this suggestion.

235 Ibid., pp. 33, 262.

236 Engelking 1992–93, p. 127.

237 Jay 1988, p. 106.

238 Engelking 1992–93, pp. 138–139.

239 Salomon Reinach, a scholar who became fascinated to the point of obsession with the poetess after reading her work in 1914, deposited his archive with documents written by and about her at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and stipulated that it could not be opened until the year 2000. Much speculation, of course, took place as to the nature of the controversial and compromising contents. It turned out to be interesting material—diaries, letters, and answers from Vivien's friends to queries sent out by Reinach—but not as explosive as many had expected. It did not turn Vivien scholarship on its head. For an overview of the contents, see Brofman 2007, p. 73.

240 Marks 1988, p. 176.

241 Vivien 1906, pp. 71, 72: 'je viens te pleurer, comme on pleure une morte'; 'soeur des Valkyries'.

242 Vivien 1904c, pp. 57–58: 'Une grande soif de justice m'enfiévra chimériquement. Je m'exaltai pour la femme méconnue, asservie par l'imbécile tyrannie masculine. J'appris à haïr le mâle, pour la basse férocité de ses lois et de sa morale impure. Je considérai son œuvre et je la jugeai mauvaise.'

243 Ibid., p. 26: 'Je ne les aime ni ne les déteste'; 'Ce sont des adversaires politiques que je me plais à injurier pour les besoins de la cause'. For another extremely clear example of Vivien's feminist sentiments, see the poem 'L'Éternelle esclave' ('The Eternal Slave') in *Du Vert au violet* (Vivien 1903b, pp. 89–90).

244 Jay 1988, p. 56.

245 Ibid., p. 115.

246 Faderman 1981/1985, p. 363.

247 Ibid., pp. 362–363.

248 Annas 1986, p. 12. Tama Lea Engelking similarly remarks on how today's feminists 'are disturbed and confused by the often misogynistic decadent aesthetic and fascination with death' (Engelking 1992–93, p. 128).

249 Annas 1986, p. 12.

250 Manning 1981, p. 49.

251 Ibid., pp. 67–68. However, though she believes Vivien appropriated the femme fatale figure as part of a feminist tactic, Manning criticizes the remaining emphasis 'on women's victory, not by superior

intelligence, but by feminine wiles' (p. 42).

252 Laity 1990, p. 219.

253 Manning 1981, p. 161.

254 Jay 1988, p. 52. This is not to say nineteenth-century Satanic discourse, in a broad sense, entailed elitism and individualism, as can be seen, for example, in socialist use of Satan, merely that the Decadent variety of it (e.g. as expressed by Mendès and Przybyszewski) had such implications.

255 Ibid., p. xvi. It is not quite true however, as Jay asserts, that Vivien had not read much of any woman writer except Sappho. As already mentioned, she was an avid reader of George Sand.

256 It could also be argued that she in fact received this conviction from the literary sources in the first place, rather than being strengthened in pre-existing opinions.

257 Jay 1988, p. 35.

258 Ibid., p. 37.

259 Cf. my arguments in chapter 4 against dichotomizing esotericism and politics.

260 Engelking 2002, pp. 371–372. See also p. 375 for further discussion of how Vivien's use of femme fatales supposedly 'ultimately served to reinforce patriarchal definitions of femininity'. Engelking has earlier (in Engelking 1992–93) performed a more positive reading of Vivien and stresses that the negative view taken in her later article is not a corrective to this, but a nuancing of it in order to better grasp the complexity of the poetic œuvre in question (p. 376).

261 Benstock 1986, p. 287.

262 Brofman 2007, p. 260.

263 Gubar 1984, p. 49. This analysis has been criticized by Shari Benstock (1986, pp. 302, 471).

264 Gubar 1984, p. 49.

265 Zimmerman 1990, p. 341.

266 Faderman 1981/1985, p. 359.

267 Marie Madeleine 1905. *Sünden*, of course, is plural, but this would sound strange in English in this phrasing.

268 Colvin 2001; http://www.sappho.com/poetry/m_madeln.html (the website presents original biographical research, drawing on first-hand accounts from Marie Madeleine's relatives, and is the most thorough account I have been able to find).

269 Faderman 1981/1985, p. 360.

270 Foster 1956/1985, pp. 175–176.

271 Marie-Madeleine 1900, p. 11: 'einst Sonnenkinder'; p. 12: 'Alltagsinsekten', 'selige Qualen'; pp. 12–13: 'Die kleinen Insekten zischten / mit ihren giftigen Zungen / und hoben höhnisch die Köpfe / und fanden das nicht erlaubt!'

272 Ibid., p. 47.

273 Ibid., p. 48: 'sündige Augenpaar', 'schmalen Lippen', 'Lass mich vergehen in deinen Armen, / mein Gott und Geliebter: Lucifer!'

274 Quoted in Kaldewey 1977: 'Marie Madeleine ist eine Hexe; sie war auf dem Blocksberg, sie hat mit allen Teufeln getanzt, und sie versichert uns mit geringerer Abwechslung, als uns anderen angenehm zu hören ist, daß sie eine Hexe sei.'

[275] Marie-Madeleine 1912, pp. 34–36.

[276] Marie-Madeleine 1920, p. 153: ‘Zaubermittel’; ‘Märchenstaub’ [‘fairytale dust’ would be a more exact translation, but the idiomatic English expression is ‘fairy dust’]; ‘geliebtes Salz’.

[277] Marie-Madeleine 1900, p. 36.

[278] Faderman 1981/1985, p. 360.

[279] Marie-Madeleine 1912, p. 40.

[280] Spivak 1988, pp. 13–15.

Yet, these women do not blush when they wear such conspicuous symbols of wickedness. Just as the serpent deceived Eve, so, too, the enticing golden ornament in the shape of a serpent enkindles a mad frenzy in the hearts of the rest of womankind.[1]

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (ca. 150–215)

9

Becoming the Demon Woman

REBELLIOUS ROLE-PLAY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter treats individuals who, both on and off the stage, actively assumed the role of the demon woman, an endeavour that to a varying degree also incorporated Satanic motifs. We will primarily look at highly public figures, but to an extent also at the unknown individuals who wore sinister serpent jewellery, which at times explicitly referenced Eve's collusion with Satan. Such jewellery became fashionable among women, especially in France, around the turn of the century. It can be viewed as yet another example of taking on the part of the demonic female, albeit probably in a more limited way. The time period that will be discussed stretches from roughly 1870 to 1932. Three persons are considered in detail: Sarah Bernhardt, the Italian marchioness Luisa Casati, and silent film actress Theda Bara.[2] They chose—or, in Bara's case, were chosen—to embody the (more or less supernatural or occult) femme fatale, as constructed mostly by male authors and artists. Seemingly, they felt this was empowering or useful for commercial, subversive, or other purposes. My analysis attempts to tease out

some of the implications this enactment of a disquieting stereotype had on an individual level as well as in a broader cultural context.

Flirting with the dark and macabre, and presenting oneself as a theatrical spectacle in semi-private settings and on the stage, may seem but the playful provocations and eccentric antics of rich, and in some cases famous, women of the day. And so it was, to a great extent. Yet, I would contend that the ludic and jocular, as is almost always the case, has a serious dimension as well. The choice of diabolical imagery for these identity games—which at times engulfed the everyday life led by the individuals in question—reveals what the taboos and limits the women consciously transgressed and mocked were tied up with: conservative Christian values. Embracing demons, Satanic serpent motifs, and the horrific could hence function as a way of criticizing such values and rejecting them on a symbolic level. In other words, demonism was one of the registers of symbolic resistance available for rebellious women to draw on. This is not to say the persons that the present chapter deals with utilized such imagery in a political struggle on behalf of all women. In fact, their projects were mounted in a highly individualistic manner reminiscent of, for example, Renée Vivien's approach. Regardless, these endeavours had wide-ranging consequences due to the prominence and fame of the figures in question. The tension between the individual and private level vis-à-vis collective and public dimensions is one of the key issues in the chapter. In the case of Theda Bara, the demonic persona was not devised by the woman in question herself, but is an example that is more of interest because of the audience response to it and what it says about shifts in use of Satan and the demonic as markers of female rebellion.

A GODDESS OF DECADENCE AND A FEMINIST PRIESTESS? SARAH BERNHARDT'S IDENTITY GAMES

No woman in the nineteenth century could match Sarah Bernhardt's (1844?–1923) genius for publicity.[3] Accordingly, Bernhardt is arguably the most well-known of all the individuals discussed in this entire study and has been called 'the most famous woman in fin-de-siècle France'.[4] As Georges Bernier puts it, she 'had the gift of being worshipped by officialdom, high society, people of the lower classes, as well as by elitist coteries of writers and artists', an unusual talent indeed.[5] Furthermore, her fame was not only national, but global—as well as lasting.

From the outset, it is important to stress that Bernhardt never explicitly employed Satanism as a discursive mode, not once verbally expressing sympathy for Satan. She did frequently play with a symbolism closely connected to Satanism, and, for example, sculpted a figurine that can be seen as a portrait of herself as the Devil. Her main importance for this chapter lies in her highly publicized penchant for dark and morbid imagery (including the diabolical) in combination with her likewise well-known transgressions of "appropriate" womanly behaviour. The bringing together of the two in a person, and one of the most famous individuals of her time at that, set a pattern for using such sinister mythical and literary motifs as a marker of female independence and theatrical rebellion. The staging of a demonic feminine persona thus became a way of signalling aloofness from societal rules and pious propriety, perhaps especially from the patriarchal bias uniting both behavioural codes. As we will see, Bernhardt found an eager heir in Luisa Casati when it came to these elements in her project.

Bernhardt's extravagant persona was tied up with a commodification of the artist as a person, which may somewhat surprisingly be seen as offering possibilities for breaking free from gendered constraints. Historian Mary Louise Roberts comments:

> Quite apart from her status as an actress, Bernhardt-as-commodity staged a self that was all illusion and artifice, a surface play of images … . But her fantasy, as a commodified fantasy, also had distinct emancipatory potential. It afforded Bernhardt yet another space besides the theater that was free from the usual groundings of identity, enabling her to disrupt, once again, the naturalized gendering of the self.[6]

While Roberts makes an interesting point, it is important to remember that Bernhardt, crafty though she was, could not completely control all facets of this commodity (her public persona).[7] The aspects that I wish to focus on, however, were mostly of her own making. She can be viewed as standing in a tradition of a 'celebrity of impudence', where among others Lord Byron, Oscar Wilde, and George Sand had preceded her in brashly flouting middle-class conventions and rising above popular opinion.[8] Flirting with the demonic was very much a typical part of such personae.

Aside from the freedom Bernhardt's self-staging afforded her, a considerable entrepreneurial energy also helped emancipate her from oppressive patriarchal structures. She did not have to take orders from men due to the fact that she owned a production company of her own from 1880

onwards and opened a theatre in Paris bearing her name in 1898.[9] In spite of her formal independence, she naturally still lived in a patriarchal society, and it is crucial to stress that she always projected multiple personae, appearing not only as a self-governing transgressive bohemian but at times also as a soft womanly woman who retained various traditionally feminine virtues.[10] The dominant image, however, was one of grandiose self-magnification, eccentricity, and complete refusal of placid domesticity.

Bernhardt did not espouse feminism publicly in an explicit manner, but much of her behaviour was clearly disruptive of gender roles: wearing men's clothes on and off the stage (though it was far from unheard of for actresses to play male parts, Bernhardt did so more often than most) and participating in activities considered somewhat controversial for women, all associated with *la nouvelle femme*, such as tennis, bicycling, and hot air ballooning.[11] Her biographer Robert Gottlieb aptly characterizes her: 'Sarah was a child of the Romantic movement, and her theatre was the theatre of feelings, of rebellion, of the Self.'[12]This also defines her off-stage persona and performance quite well. Much of her lifestyle was as rebellious—and "immoral"—as could possibly be imagined in the period: single motherhood, adultery, and, in her youth, posing for nude photographs.[13] Her credentials as a subversive rule-breaker were in other words impeccable, but all this occurred on an individual level and without any clearly articulated agitation for women's rights in general.

It is certainly true, as Susan A. Glenn points out, that for Bernhardt, 'the right to be herself was not a political project but a highly romantic individual one'.[14] However, we need to bear in mind that the extremely public performance of this project naturally also had political implications and effects. While no *Lex Bernhardt* was passed in France to the benefit of all women, it seems a modest assumption to say that she had great importance as a role model. Mary Louise Roberts has argued that figures like Bernhardt were instrumental in creating new opportunities for women and causing a shift in gender roles by setting a transgressive example, although they did not forthrightly embrace feminism or in a completely consistent manner break with gendered expectations. Rather, Bernhardt and her peers played with gender norms by shifting back and forth between conventional and unconventional roles and behaviour. This, it has been claimed, made other women seek inspiration in her persona for their own struggle for freedom.[15]

It is notable, for instance, that feminists frequently idolized Bernhardt, with feminist newspaper *La Fronde* glowingly describing her in 1897 as a 'queen' and 'priestess outside the temple'.[16] Parisian lesbians also used her as a role model when forging subversive sexual identities. In particular, they mimicked her cross-dressing roles.[17] Having established her importance as a feminist role model, in deed if not in words, it is now time to consider Bernhardt's utilization of demonic and sinister motifs.

DECADENT CONNECTIONS, THE BAT HAT, AND BERNHARDT'S WITCHY HOME

On stage, Bernhardt played many femme fatale roles (Cleopatra in two different plays, Lady Macbeth, Medea in the eponymous 1898 play by Catulle Mendès, and so on). She also performed as an unfaithful wife pretending to be a ghost, in Victorien Sardou's *Spiritisme* (1897), and as a gypsy burned at the stake by the Inquisition in the same author's *La Sorcière* (1903). The latter, when performed in Montreal in 1905, made her the target of verbal and physical attacks encouraged by the local archbishop, who objected to the negative portrayal of the witch burners (figure 9.1).[18]

FIGURE 9.1 Sarah Bernhardt (ca. 1844–1923) in Victorien Sardou's play *La Sorcière* (1903). The archbishop of Montreal was so upset by the less than flattering depiction of Christian witch burners in it

that he encouraged verbal and physical attacks on the actress. Cabinet card from the author's collection.

Although she never appeared in the role, she also became closely associated with the quintessential wicked woman of the fin-de-siècle: Salome. She was supposed to play her in Oscar Wilde's piece of the same name, but her 1893 rehearsals in London were interrupted when British authorities denied approval for its performance due to the representation of biblical figures. Incorrectly, the *Times* reported Wilde had written the part with her in mind, and the two became tightly connected in the public imagination. Through this much-publicized theatrical scandal, the actress also became linked with Decadence and British Aestheticism.[19] Her appearance in Italian arch-Decadent d'Annunzio's *La Città morta* ('The Dead City') five years later further consolidated these ties, as did her generous patronage of the morbid poet Maurice Rollinat. They were then set in stone by the Symbolist periodical *La Plume* devoting a whole issue to her in 1900.[20] Highly important for her self-apotheosis into a 'déesse de la décadance' ('goddess of decadence'), as a recent article calls her, was also her cooperation with Czech artist Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939). His posters promoting her plays use formal elements borrowed from religious art, in particular the icon, turning her into an inaccessible, elevated, and distanced divine creature. They consistently emphasize the sinister aspects of the plays: for *Médée* a dead child is placed in the foreground of the composition, for *Lorenzaccio* a threatening dragon. Through this combining of conventions from religious art with symbols of evil, the posters made her an embodiment of the eternal demonic feminine discussed in chapter 7. Mucha also came up with a bat-shaped hairstyle (in Decadent bestiaries an animal representing twilight and melancholy) for her appearance in *Médée*, and together with Parisian jeweller Georges Fouquet he designed a huge, spectacular snake bracelet for her in 1899 (figure 9.2).[21] An equally outlandish serpent handbag (ca. 1901–1903) by René Lalique was also probably created specifically for Bernhardt.[22]

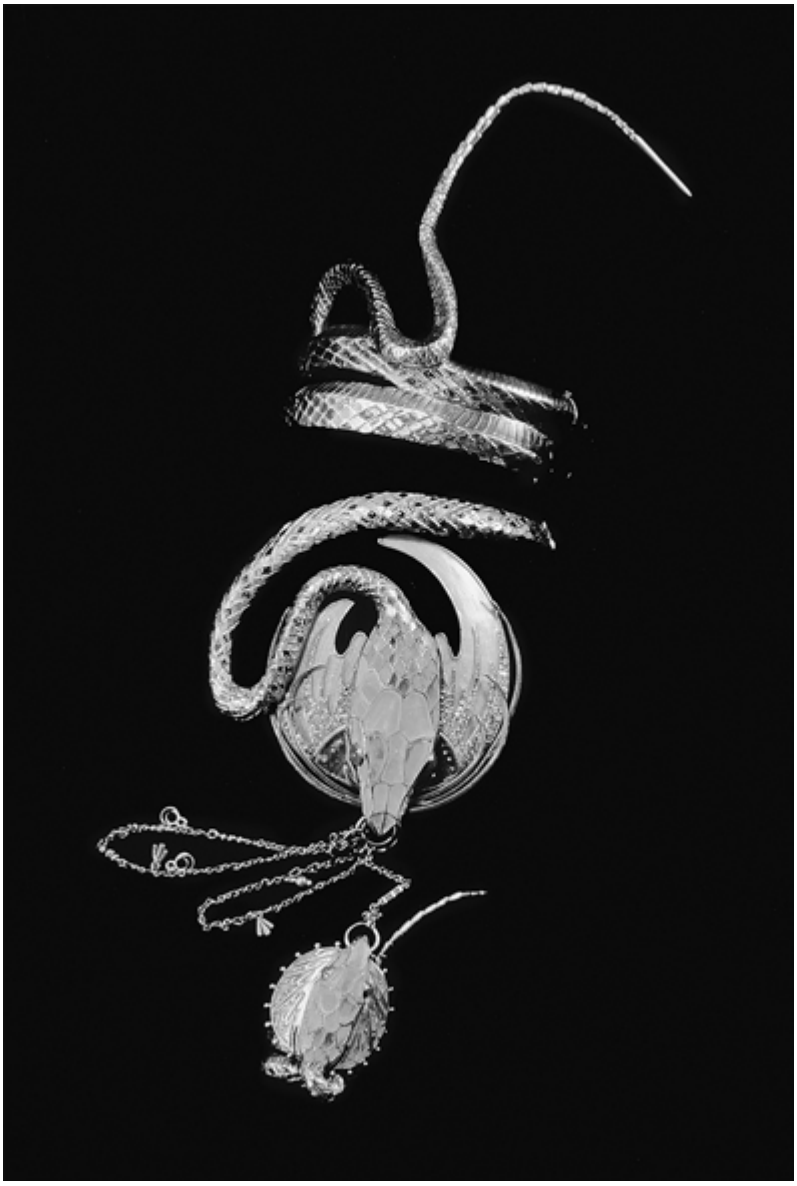

FIGURE 9.2 Bernhardt's snake bracelet, designed for her by Alphonse Mucha and George Fouquet, 1899, photo © Mucha Trust 2016.

FIGURE 9.3 Bernhardt in her bat hat, featuring a real taxidermied animal, TCS 2, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

As the handbag indicates, the actress fondly embraced weird and disturbing attributes even off the stage. One of her most fanciful accessories was a hat adorned with a taxidermied bat (figure 9.3).[23] A notorious tale about Bernhardt concerns her habit of sleeping in a coffin. The exact details are unclear, but the coffin definitely existed and she brought it with her on her tours. A photo of her at rest in it, taken in 1873, was widely distributed as a cabinet card and made her a considerable amount of money.[24] Among her most cherished possessions was a real human skull given to her by Victor

Hugo and inscribed with one of his poems.[25] According to Mucha, Bernhardt 'didn't worry about fashion, she dressed herself in accordance with her own taste', and he added, 'rarely has someone's soul been more faithfully exteriorized'.[26] Exactly what one's soul is like if it is exteriorized by wearing a taxidermied bat on the head, or the snake bracelet Mucha designed, is open to speculation. Bernhardt self-consciously tried to present herself, her very person, as a work of art, and the peculiar contents of her wardrobe and jewel box should be seen as tools to achieve this 'cultivated memorability'.[27]

Bernhardt's equally colourful home—wherever it was set up at the moment—was also very much part of this undertaking. The author Pierre Loti was fascinated by her bedroom, 'sumptuous and funereal', where 'the walls, ceiling, doors, and windows are all hung with heavy black Chinese satin embroidered with bats and mythical monsters'. He also noted the famous coffin, a skeleton she called Lazarus, and 'a full-length mirror framed in black velvet; perched on the frame, a stuffed vampire bat, a real one, its hairy wings outstretched'.[28] This bizarre abode, in its various incarnations at different addresses, was the subject of many articles and constituted an integral element of her legend. It functioned as a manifestation of how private and public, personal life and performance, were conflated in Bernhardt's artistic project—with the mass media and her audience as eager participants in this intermingling. An 1891 article in *The Decorator and Furnisher* shows how closely interwoven person and place had come to be. The author, Maurice Guillemot, describes how '[r]eclining on an immense divan . . . with capitals of snakes in bronze relief, is the enchantress herself'.[29] In the article, her home comes across as a stage set, the dwelling of a witch who is framed by serpents in a slightly sinister *tableau vivant*. English artist W. Graham Robertson offered a similar description, this time of the actress and one of her pets entering the room: 'The mysterious white-robed figure of Sarah coming down the steps into her studio with the lynx gliding noiselessly beside her was so suggestive of Circe that one looked about for the pigs.'[30] Significantly, in the aforementioned article, objects of her own creation are especially highlighted and merged with her persona: she shows the author a statue of cupid leaning on a scythe that she has chiselled, and he muses 'she, also, could be portrayed as a cupid with her cruel scythe, with innumerable

victims heaped up around her, with the hearts of dreamers, of poets and artists'.[31]

Another aspect of Bernhardt's endless flaunting of her eccentricity was the large menagerie she kept, which, at various times, included a parrot, a monkey (named Darwin), seven chameleons, a wolf dog, a lynx, an alligator, a tiger cub, a cheetah, and a boa constrictor.[32] Her love of the animal kingdom supposedly also extended to scheming with her doctors to graft a tiger tail unto her own spine, a plan that was, unsurprisingly, never realized.[33] On her arrival in New York in 1880, a promotional biography was published. It contained a list of disclaimers, which, of course, was intended to further disseminate the extravagant rumours rather than stamp them out. On the list, we find the story of her predilection for sleeping in a coffin as well as allegations that her favourite dishes included 'burnt cats, lizard's tails, and peacock brains' (a diet worthy of the witches from Macbeth!) and that she made a habit of playing croquet with human skulls. Although all this was false, the biography asserted, it conceded that she did in fact keep 'the skeleton of a man who is said to have destroyed himself on account of disappointment in love'.[34]

'A KIND OF DEVIL-SPHINX': ATHEISM AND SARAH'S SATANIC SELF-PORTRAIT

One of the many ways in which Bernhardt defied gender roles was her success in the field of sculpture. Being a fairly accomplished sculptress and —perhaps more important—a grand celebrity, she was granted the privilege of exhibiting at the annual Salon in Paris for more than two decades. In this age, sculpting was considered highly unsuitable work for a woman. Even so, one year she even received an honourable mention for a large group study presented at the Salon. Some established sculptors, like Rodin, were unimpressed, but others thought more highly of her work. Regardless, her sculptures sold well.[35] Here too, she favoured dark themes, for example, in *Le Fou et la mort* ('The Fool and Death'), based on a character from Hugo's banned play *Le Roi s'amuse* ('The King Amuses Himself', 1832). The most interesting piece for our present purpose is her self-portrait *Encrier fantastique* (roughly 'Fantasy inkwell', 1880), also known as *Self-Portrait as a Sphinx* (figure 9.4). I have been unable to ascertain whether the sphinx name, which is the one commonly seen in English-language works on

Bernhardt, is an after-construct, or if the sculptress herself named it thus.[36] Sphinxes are not typically depicted with bat wings, and the spiny reptilian tail is not typical either, making it look more like a dragon—in Christianity a well-established symbol of Satan—or a demon. The horned skull resting on the edge of a bowl adorned with ram's horns, which the creature is clutching, also points in the direction of a diabolical motif drawing on Christian mythology rather than Greek.[37] We can further think of Cazotte's female Satan, still very well-known in France at the time, and the tradition in art (see chapter 2) of depicting Satan as a woman or with a partly female anatomy. The self-portrait can thus potentially be given a "Satanic" reading, and it appears quite likely many of her contemporaries would have picked up on that fact. Evidence of this can be found in an unsigned *New York Times* article from November 1880. Bernhardt had brought her paintings and sculptures with her on an American tour and held showings of them to an eager selected audience. In New York the chosen numbered around 500 people, among them the *Times* reporter. Discussing the works of art, the writer notes that 'a characteristic piece is an inkstand, consisting of a kind of devil-sphinx, having the head and face of the accomplished actress'.[38] The report in other words stated Bernhardt had portrayed herself as a devil-figure.

FIGURE 9.4 Bernhardt's *Encrier fantastique* (1880), a self-portrait of the actress as a female devil. Photograph © 2017, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Journalistic discourse could also hold Bernhardt up as Satanic, as metaphorically related to the Devil himself, without connecting it with her sculpture. In 1890, one of the writers for the newspaper *L'Éclair* stated that 'she descends in a curvy line from the serpent who corrupted Eve'.[39] The critic Jules Lemaître saw her as 'a distant chimerical creature, sacred and serpentine with a fascination both mystic and sensual'.[40] The comparison to a serpent—albeit not always an explicitly Satanic representative of this species—was recurring, and caricatures often presented her as a human-

snake hybrid.[41] This can be viewed in relation to the well-known sculpture of the serpent tempting Eve, situated at an entrance to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. The cunning fallen angel here has the torso of a woman and the lower body of a snake.[42] Other sinister descriptions in the press also abound. A 1905 article in the *New York Telegram* portrayed her almost as a sort of vampire (especially if we consider the words in conjunction with the famous tale of her sleeping in a coffin), a figure that 'seemed like something supernatural' and 'might be any age or no age at all', though she was by now in her early sixties.[43] A 1908 article—fittingly enough for a Satanic female figure of titanic stature—made her out to be a female counterpart to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.[44]

When it comes to use of not only dark and sinister motifs, but a specifically Satanic imagery (which the inkwell she sculpted certainly encompasses in some sense), we can note Bernhardt's association with George Sand, whom she greatly admired (though the affection was not fully reciprocated).[45] Sand, as the reader will recall, had included a controversial passage in one of her most famous novels, *Consuelo*, where Satan is elevated as a liberator. Another of her idols and associates, Victor Hugo, had also expressed sympathy for Satan. Further, Catulle Mendès was a close friend of hers, and his awe-inspiring Satanist lesbian Sophor (see chapter 8) may owe something to Bernhardt in her pose of proud defiance of norms, though this portrayal cannot have inspired the actress's play with Satanic symbolism as an expression of this, given that *Méphistophéla* was published ten years after the sculpture was finished.[46] Mendès's early 1870s poems where he celebrated Satan could quite possibly have been known to her at this time, however. The inkwell might be seen as an inversion of Lévi's famous Baphomet engraving, which has the face of a beast (a goat) and the torso of a woman, whereas Bernhardt's piece has the face of a woman and the body of a beast (a dragon). She could have been familiar with this image, since several of her friends (Mendès, Hugo) knew Lévi personally and were enthusiastic readers of his books. While Bernhardt herself does not seem to have held any developed esoteric interests, her generally dismissive attitude towards religion makes it seem likely she may have found rebellious Romantic Satanism attractive. Although raised Catholic, Bernhardt was largely irreligious for most of her life, though she enjoyed playing parts like Joan of Arc. At one time, she supposedly said to the devout Catholic

composer Charles Gounod, 'Me pray! Never, I'm an atheist.'[47] Testifying further to this attitude, one of her lovers angrily wrote to her in a letter: '[Y]ou do not believe in things sacred. You deny their existence, and I am horrified by sacrilege.'[48]Portraying herself as Satan, in one of many oppositional manoeuvres mocking all propriety, would fit in with such a view of Christianity.

We should, I would argue, understand Bernhardt as having functioned both as an icon of defiance and, paradoxically, an injunction for other women to keep in line.[49] The sinister traits in her persona were double-edged, potentially working at the same time as symbols of fierce opposition and a denigration of women's liberation as demonic. Bernhardt can hence, in some sense, be seen as an embodiment of both Satanic feminism and Demonized feminism, a figure that held both emancipatory and oppressive potential simultaneously. While her persona was by no means exclusively built on dark and demonic themes, they did form a pronounced part of it. However, she set an example in this regard that would be taken to further extremes by a woman with no thespian career, but in possession of the financial resources and imagination to mount an off-stage show, in the borderland between private and public, that rivalled anything theatre directors or self-dramatizing actresses ever dreamed up: the Marchesa Luisa Casati.

LUISA CASATI'S OFF-STAGE PERFORMANCE OF DEMONIC FEMININITY

Luisa Casati's (1881–1957) granddaughter once said of her that she 'seemed like a figure out of a fairy tale come to life, magical, terrifying, and to be treated with considerable awe', adding, 'She undoubtedly came by taxi, but for all I knew the amazing apparition I saw could have flown in on a broomstick.'[50] Although never as famous as Sarah Bernhardt, Luisa Casati was a major celebrity in her own time, whose doings were reported in gossip columns across the world.[51] She cultivated a demonic persona (which also included a practical interest in ceremonial magic) much more explicitly than Bernhardt. Not being an actress by profession rendered this a part of herself in a considerably more prominent manner. In fact, it is more or less impossible to separate Casati the woman from Casati the eccentric performer of an ultra-Decadent persona.

As a child she had been shy and was overshadowed by her more classically beautiful sister. Her later flamboyance has been interpreted as a way to handle this shyness.[52] At the time that she began cultivating her eccentricity and extravagance, Casati was in her early twenties. Her parents had passed on, leaving their daughters a huge fortune amassed from the cotton industry. Casati had married an eminent titled man and had a little daughter. Rather than devoting her energy to being a wife and mother, however, she indulged in occult interests, collecting books on magic and paraphernalia like tarot cards and crystal balls, as well as organizing séances in the couple's home. Such activities were in all likelihood perceived as nothing more than innocent parlour games by most attendees, since flirting with the esoteric was very much in vogue at the time.[53] As we shall see, Casati's obsession with all things magical and mysterious seems to have run deeper than this.

Casati started wearing eye-catching attire for social functions and soon dressed this way not only at parties but almost every day. Instead of trying to hide her unusual height and slenderness, she now chose garments that accentuated them, whitened her already pallid face further and ringed her uncommonly large eyes with kohl.[54] She was legally separated from her husband in 1914, but they had drifted apart much earlier. Philippe Jullian designates her 'Italy's first divorcée' and underscores that in this country 'divorced women were still considered plague-stricken'.[55] The catalyst for her throwing off all shackles of convention was probably meeting the Decadent author Gabriele d'Annunzio in 1903 and becoming his lover. Their relationship would last on and off for most of their lives. Casati's biographers Ryersson and Yaccarino view the first stages of her transformation into an embodiment of Decadent fantasy as a move aimed to please d'Annunzio.[56] However, the process soon took on a life of its own, and unlike most of the author's numerous other lovers, she was never in the least subservient to him. Dubbed 'Kore' by d'Annunzio, after the maiden daughter of Zeus and Demeter who was kidnapped by Hades and turned into the queen of the underworld, she frenchified it by altering the spelling to 'Coré', and this was the name he would use for her from then on.[57] In a letter beckoning her to come, he wrote: 'I welcome Coré to return right away to Hell where Hades awaits her.'[58]

Casati is recorded as saying 'I want to be a living work of art'. Accordingly, her endeavour to become Europe's most exotic woman is possible to read as an artistic project, a grand *Gesamtkunstwerk*, though the fruits of her labour were exhibited outside any orthodox structures for displaying art.[59] Her ties to the world of art were nevertheless strong, as she associated with some of the most important artists of her age and functioned as a muse and patron to them. The Marchesa befriended figures like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), who was in the process of developing futurism, and further on surrealist photographer Man Ray (Emmanuel Radnitzky, 1890–1976), whose breakthrough was strongly indebted to a portrait of Casati.[60] He was but one of many artists to depict her through the years, a fact that contributed greatly to her international fame. Casati's career as a dark muse started with a portrait by renowned painter Giovanni Boldini (1842–1931), which caused a sensation at the 1909 Paris Salon. A critic for *Le Figaro* opined that her unusual face 'presents an almost "witches sabbat" mein [*sic*] in its big-eyed appearance' and wrote of her likeness as an 'anti-Gioconda'.[61] Soon, Casati was also immortalized in numerous works of literature, with d'Annunzio's 1910 novel *Forse che sì forse che no* ('Maybe Yes, Maybe No') as the first.[62] Many perceived her as an incarnation of the women dreamed up by the collective imagination of the Decadent movement, and artists with a predilection for the bizarre flocked to Casati. For example, she was a muse to the German Beardsley imitator Hans Henning von Voigt (1887–1969), better known as Alastair, whose work, from their first meeting in 1914 onwards, featured countless depictions of her (figure 9.5).[63] Author and illustrator Philippe Jullian later wrote of Alastair, 'His drawings—more cruel than Beardsley's—could illustrate a fashion magazine in Hell, with the Marquis de Sade as editor-in-chief and La Casati as its only model.'[64] Just like Casati, Alastair was interested in occultism, and he counted the British artist and radically innovative magus Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956) among his personal acquaintances and influences.[65] This is of interest because it shows Casati to have been just one friend away from a major name in practised magic with a decidedly "dark" tinge.

FIGURE 9.5 Drawing of Casati by Alastair (Hans Henning von Voigt), 1914. Courtesy of the Casati Archives.

As with Bernhardt, an important part of Casati's flamboyant persona was her menagerie of exotic animals. Although this was hardly something anyone took seriously, there circulated rumours that Casati was a modern-day Circe, whose many strange pets were actually men she had turned into animals using sorcery.[66] Her Venetian palace contained a garden filled with white peacocks and albino blackbirds, and she would stroll through town with a pair of cheetahs (frequently mistaken for leopards) on a leash. A miniature crocodile, a blue-dyed greyhound, and a parrot named Bra-cadabrà were

also part of her private zoo.[67] The animal that she would come to be most strongly associated with was the snake. She had several such companions through the years and brought them with her when she travelled, carrying them in satin-lined boxes made to order by exclusive jewellers.[68] She would even bring her snakes when invited to dinner, and one anecdote tells of how a large snake remained coiled around her arm throughout an entire meal. Another time, she was asked whether her gold serpent necklace was Egyptian, whereupon the "necklace", which was actually a live specimen, uncoiled itself, to the astonishment of those present (figure 9.6).[69] Reportedly, she also used a boa constrictor as a belt on one occasion (figure 9.7).[70]

It would seem her serpents had a certain diabolical significance, as evident from a mural in Casati's Paris home. In the pavilion that contained her library of magic books, and the collection of portraits of herself, she had a famous mural painter cover a wide wall panel with a depiction of her as a nude Eve in the Garden of Eden, accompanied by the serpent and on quite friendly terms with it.[71] Here, she was clearly referencing the Satanic symbolism of snakes and displaying a form of sympathy for the Devil. Considering the placement of the mural in a library of esoteric literature, it might have been inspired by the view, for example, in Theosophy, of Satan as a bringer of gnosis. At a costume party Casati hosted, she was supposed to appear as a jewelled serpent with two nude attendants as Adam and Eve flanking her (due to the jeering of a disruptive crowd, which had climbed her garden walls, she refused to leave her room, so this outfit was never shown to the world).[72] For another party she let loose an abundance of snakes on the dance floor, some of which were mechanical—constructed by a German master toy maker—and some real.[73]

Casati probably used the Satanic motifs as a deliberately transgressive emblem of independence and rebellion. Her choice of diabolical symbolism as one of her vehicles for self-mythologization was hardly random. She was steeped in a Decadent tradition of using these specific motifs for similar ends, and they were the perfect tokens of elitist aloofness from social mores —in particular, those regulating women's lives—and the conservative ideals espoused by the Catholic Church. Her status as a divorcée had already formally severed her relationship with the church, and this may have been a way to further demonstrate how little she cared about its moral codes.

FIGURE 9.6 Miniature portrait of Casati with snake necklace. Courtesy of the Casati Archives.

FIGURE 9.7 Casati in Paris with one of her serpents, ca. 1920s. Courtesy of the Casati Archives.

THE MARCHESA'S OCCULT PARTIES, ESOTERIC RITUALS, AND HER MAGICAL HOME

In her role-playing antics, Casati consistently cultivated the sinister, as when she let herself be depicted as Cesare Borgia, holding a dagger from her collection that had in fact belonged to this nefarious historical figure. Further examples include a portrait as Medusa and a Lady Macbeth costume. The Borgia painting is also an interesting illustration of a gender-bending dimension of her play-acting. She shares this predilection with other figures

we have encountered in the present study, like Blavatsky and Bernhardt, who challenged traditional gender roles. In all these cases, the subversive reversals of gender identity were combined with use of a direful symbolism. As evidenced, for example, by Casati's black parchment stationery crested by a death's head and a rose, the macabre and dark was an integral part of her overall aesthetic, not only her way of dressing.[74] In her penchant for all things bad and baleful, the occult and the devilish was, however, the pool of imagery she drew most liberally from. This aspect was also highlighted in press reports on her doings. A column in *Harper's Bazar*, for instance, declared that seeing her 'one is reminded of some "Goya" miraculously come to life'.[75]

For one party, Casati had a costume made that turned her into a 'personification of her beloved black arts': all black and emerald green, with black pearls, tassels, a green wig, and a helmet sporting black plumes (figure 9.8).[76] An even more spectacular outfit was her 'Queen of Night' ensemble, inspired by the evil character of this name in Mozart's esoteric opera *Die Zauberflöte* ('The Magic Flute', 1791) and decorated all over with real diamonds (figure 9.9).[77] On other occasions Casati wore a headdress of taxidermied snakes, and she sometimes—for instance at a socialite dinner party—affixed gilded ram's horns to her temples.[78] The horns can be viewed as a further example of her deliberate references to Satanic themes (but could also be seen as inspired by depictions of satyrs, although these figures largely overlapped iconographically with devils). A playfully ritualistic and perhaps even slightly blasphemous accessory worn by Casati was a ring from which a microscopic incense holder hung on three miniscule chains, emitting smoke from a tiny piece of incense.[79] The final major fête hosted by Casati had Cagliostro, the famed Italian eighteenth-century esotericist, as its theme. The banquet was lit by black candles and the bartenders were masked as devils. The Marchesa herself—again crossing gender boundaries—took on the role of Cagliostro, brandishing a specially made "magic" crystal sword.[80]

FIGURE 9.8 Casati in her ‘personification of her beloved black arts’ costume, wielding a crystal ball, ca. 1913. Courtesy of the Casati Archives.

FIGURE 9.9 Casati in her Queen of the Night costume, 1922. Courtesy of the Casati Archives.

There are indications that Casati's lasting interest in the occult was something she did not pursue for sheer amusement, but that she actually believed in the powers of seers and esotericists. However, certain accounts by acquaintances also hint at a more light-hearted approach at times. She seems to have had a succession of occultists in her employ, and these sometimes provided after-dinner entertainment—as recounted in dancer Isadora Duncan's description of such a figure being called for in Casati's Rome villa: 'She arrived in a high, pointed hat and witch's cloak, and began to tell our fortunes with the cards.'[81] In the company of d'Annunzio, Casati

attended a great number of séances and supernatural soirées, gatherings that probably quite often mingled playfulness with earnestness.[82] Possibly more serious was the Marchesa's attempt, again together with d'Annunzio, to raise the spirits of the ancient warriors resting in the ruined tombs on the Appia Antica. The ritual took place on midnight on June 20, 1915.[83] Ryersson and Yaccarino suggest that 'quite possibly they simply enjoyed the atmospheric thrills to be had during such arcane theatrics'.[84] Given the lacking documentation of Casati's private thoughts, it could very well also have been something more sincere and "genuine". Casati, as Philippe Jullian notes, used the word *sorceress* to describe herself.[85] Her contemporaries accordingly considered her a person 'familiar with all the necromantic extravagances that had flourished at the close of the century'.[86] If it was all a game, the player invested it with an extremely uncommon amount of effort. Further confirmation of her dedication—playful, serious, or both—to ominous sorcery can be found in her choices concerning home decoration.

Casati seldom settled in one place for a long time, and successively took up residence in Rome, Venice, Capri, Paris, and London. Wherever she went, she put her stamp on the house and decorated it in opulently bizarre and Decadent style. Floors would be carpeted with tiger and leopard skins, and such artefacts as (what was claimed to be) a unicorn horn would be on display. On Capri, she rented the Villa San Michele built by the Swedish court physician Axel Munthe. Much to his chagrin, but true to her habits, she covered the interior of the house in golden curtains, heavy black velvet draperies and animal skins. She left only two elements of the house's original decoration: a huge bust of Medusa and an Egyptian granite sphinx. One room held her magic equipment, including books supposedly bound in human skin with hair still growing on them. On one wall an esoteric motto was inscribed: 'Oser. Vouloir. Savoir. Se taire.' ('Dare. Will. Know. Keep silent.'). It was probably taken from Eliphas Lévi's *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* ('Dogma and Ritual of the High Magic', 1855) but can also be found in Aleister Crowley's *Liber Aleph* (1918). We can here note that during her Capri days, Casati planned to go to Sicily to visit the small community of esotericists Crowley had established there, but she never went. Similar to what locals and others believed about the English magus on Sicily, rumours soon spread that Casati was celebrating Black Masses in her villa and that she slept in a coffin.[87]

Whatever the truth in these rumours—nothing in them is entirely inconceivable in the context—there was someone else on the same island who was also supposed to indulge in depraved Satanic rites: homosexual nobleman Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen, whom we encountered in chapter 8. Casati was disappointed, however, to discover his Black Masses 'had been at worst pink'.[88] Ryersson and Yaccarino state that 'although devoted to the dark arts, the Marchesa's black masses were, in truth, just as "pink" as those of Baron Fersen'.[89] This may or may not have been so. We cannot say decisively, since there is little documentation of what her magical experiments were like, and it is fully possible they were an earnest pursuit that could have had some genuinely diabolical content for all we know. Since no diaries or revealing letters by the Marchesa's own hand exist, and hardly any direct statements of hers are documented, it is difficult to understand her activities and motivations.[90] The analysis by Ryersson and Yaccarino is certainly convincing in that it fits in with other known aspects of Casati's life and personality. What I wish to point out is merely that the lines between play, artistic projects, and esoteric beliefs were generally quite blurred in this milieu at the time, as we have seen many examples of in earlier chapters. Because of this, and due to the dearth of detailed documentation concerning the matter, it is as unfounded to dismiss her magical practice as mere play as claiming she was a fully fledged magician; we simply do not know for sure (as Ryersson and Yaccarino also emphasize).

One thing, however, is certain: her experiments apparently did not include a successful attempt to make gold, since decades of reckless spending eventually depleted even the huge fortune of the Marchesa Casati. In December 1932, her personal possessions were auctioned by the French authorities to pay off her debts. She spent her remaining years impoverished, moving between various humble lodgings in London. Yet, she never lost her famed joie de vivre and remained committed to enjoying life to the fullest even under these dire circumstances. Her passion for the occult also remained intact. Unable to afford employing professional mediums, she engaged actively with the spirit world herself instead, using an Ouija board and a wand she claimed had belonged to a great magician.[91]

In *Forse che sì forse che no*, d'Annunzio "esotericizes" Casati and connects her with magical and occult imagery. For example, he muses about the "alchemy" of the character based on her: 'By what fire did she transmute the substance of her life into beauties of such moving power?'[92] Concerning the real Casati, we can also ask: What did she gain from doing so? One guest described Casati's appearance at a ball as 'a creature of dreams, a manifestation of legend'.[93] This "mythification" of herself is of key importance. Much like Bernhardt, she hereby elevated herself above mere mortals and thus transcended the constraints put on ordinary women. Ascending to become a foreboding mythical figure functioned as a moral mutiny, a rejection of the petty supporting roles in the drama of life offered most mundane mortal women, even those belonging to the nobility. Whether Casati internalized the turn-of-the-century femme fatale mythology in a psychological sense we cannot know. Perhaps she merely played with it as a persona she projected in public, but dropped as soon as a social function was over. This latter alternative would seem less likely, considering how completely immersed in this role-play she evidently was. Casati was once described as an 'actress without a theater who spent her life playing to the crowd, and even more to herself, the characters who inhabited her imagination'.[94] The notion of her primary audience being herself is interesting. If we accept this, she was not so much acting out men's (more or less misogynist) fantasies for their benefit as creating a persona that she was comfortable with. Initially, d'Annunzio may have been her "spectator", so to speak, perhaps even the instigator of her role-playing, but in a longer perspective her lifestyle can hardly be said to have centred on pleasing any man. She was too busy pleasing herself, indulging in her own eccentricities, and more or less independently devised identity games. As Ryersson and Yaccarino point out, Casati's 'power to become whatever she desired', must be considered 'a rarity, especially among women, of any class at this time'.[95]

There is nothing to imply that Casati was ever concerned in the least with women's rights in a collectivist manner. Of course, it was very important to her that she herself had the possibility to behave exactly as she wanted, without being concerned with what was appropriate for women. Just like, for example, Renée Vivien and Natalie Barney, she belonged to a small, privileged group of immensely rich women who, empowered by their wealth (though, in Casati's case, not set completely free until she divorced her husband), could cultivate their eccentricity virtually in peace from the

dictates of patriarchy and general small-minded conventionality. It would also seem that Casati, like Barney, was a considerable snob, who in her extreme elitism came to feel the pull of the dawning fascist movement. In fact, it has even been claimed that it was Casati who introduced Ezra Pound to fascist ideology.[96] In another parallel to Barney, it appears Casati may have experimented with lesbianism, and she briefly took to wearing jewellery that at the time signalled belonging to the elite lesbian community: gold bracelets above the left elbow and around the right ankle.[97] This can be seen as yet another example of her flouting of conventional morality. Although she probably did not think of herself as a feminist and was to the best of my knowledge not held up as a model of independent womanhood by contemporary feminists (like Bernhardt was), Casati was still a prominent autonomous female, who incidentally—or not so incidentally—projected an at times quite explicitly Satanic persona. She was utterly self-governed, did as she pleased no matter the cost (to her reputation or her bank account), toyed with the transgression of gender boundaries, and unequivocally connected herself to Satan in several ways. Celebrating the infernal was, it seems, an integral part of her declaration of idiosyncratic independence.

Casati at first partly patterned her re-imagining of herself on Bernhardt, whom she had idolized as a child. For one of her first truly extravagant public appearances, a ball in Rome, she wore a costume inspired by that once made for the great actress when playing the part of a legendary Byzantine queen. Later, she appeared at a fête in the role of Bernhardt herself.[98] This borrowing of a persona, as well as her reliance on Satanic motifs, in some ways parallels what Egyptologist and cultural theorist Jan Assmann designates *zitathaftes Leben* ('life in quotation'). This term is derived from a 1936 lecture by Thomas Mann, who had in turn borrowed it from the psychoanalyst Ernst Kris. The latter had claimed that the subjects of biographies—in his discussion primarily those dealing with artists—commonly lead their lives in accordance with certain biographical patterns. It was not the case, he argued, that biographers subsequently forced the artists' time on earth into such a pattern when writing their life history. Rather, they themselves chose to live their life according to a certain model. Mann held up religious figures, such as Christ, as other instances of this. Here, religious myth serves to legitimize a way of life (or even a certain way of dying) and makes it meaningful. According to Assmann and Mann, these patterns are part of a collective consciousness, meaning that they are deeply

embedded in a culture and are culturally transmitted. They are not something biologically inherited, which exists outside of history, like Jung's collective unconscious. Yet, knowledge of them is typically located in the (individual) unconscious, although it has, so to speak, trickled down into it from the surrounding culture.[99] When it comes to figures like Casati, or for that matter Bernhardt, it is quite clear that they were living their 'lives in quotation' very consciously and intentionally, but indeed drawing on cultural stereotypes—such as those surrounding Satan as the patron of dangerously independent women—similar in function to those Assmann is dealing with. Here, too, a mythical role, the diabolic femme fatale, functions as a framework for life.

Parallels to some of Assmann's (Mann's, Kris's) ideas can also be found in an interesting but brief article, where Johannes A. Gaertner discusses the mechanisms of (secular) myth and fixed cultural patterns in the lives of artists from a historical perspective. Artists, it would seem, have for many generations been prone to adopt certain patterns of life, frequently quite intentionally emulating peers and predecessors. The most obvious example is the bohemian persona that became firmly established in the nineteenth century, an early form of what would later be designated the "alienated" artist. Another such role is that of the "mad" artist, closely aligned to that of the "sick genius" of whom the Decadent artist is a sub-category.[100] To some extent, Casati could fit in with this tendency, and, aside from her borrowings from Bernhardt, her persona is in a way an appropriation of the male Romantic or Decadent artist's cultivated eccentricity (as exemplified by Gerard de Nerval's lobster on a leash and the young Théophile Gautier's peculiar hairstyle and way of dressing). Casati's fascination with Bernhardt and artists of this type—as well as with the diabolical—can perhaps be seen as encompassing both the stereotypes of extravagant artist biographies and a pre-existing anti-Christian, or at least heretical, outsider persona. Her identity game is thus a 'life in quotation', which quite explicitly references both the vita of the stereotypical Decadent artist and his literary creation: the sinister, more or less supernatural and fiercely independent femme fatale in league with Satan. While Bernhardt tried, to some extent, to balance her outrageousness with a (small) measure of respectability, Casati made no such attempts. She instead unapologetically took her direful role-playing all the way, using some of the most extreme expressions possible. As a living, breathing example of a 'demon woman' it would be difficult to find her match.

According to Phillipe Jullian, there is a clear line of development from Luisa Casati to the so-called vamp of silent films, of which Theda Bara (1885–1955) was the prime example.[101] Bara was born as Theodosia Goodman in a Jewish family in Cincinnati in 1885 (though she herself later claimed it was in 1890) and started her career as a stage actress.[102] In 1914, the Fox Film Corporation offered her the lead role in *A Fool There Was*, a movie based on a 1906 play by Porter Emerson Browne, which was in turn inspired by Kipling's poem 'The Vampire'. The film brought in huge receipts. Although her stage career was not very successful, Bara was still—or so she later claimed—initially reluctant to accept playing this wicked figure, a non-supernatural "psychic vampire" doing evil for evil's own sake.[103] Fox's publicity department staged an elaborate campaign to promote the film and built it around the newfound leading lady. The so-called star system was not yet in place, and film companies had not begun to peddle their wares as vehicles for celebrities—quite often, actors were not even identified by name. This, in fact, was the first time a large-scale campaign was centred on a movie actor. The publicity men concocted an extravagant background story and gave her a new name, Theda Bara, which according to the explanation later provided was an anagram of 'Arab Death'. Keeping with this funereal theme, she posed for publicity stills along with a skeleton—seemingly a lover she had drained the life from. Other photos had her frolicking with serpents, vampire bats, Egyptian mummies, ravens, and skulls. Press releases held her up as a reincarnation of such feminine icons of evil as Delilah, Elizabeth Bathory, and Lucrezia Borgia.[104] Further on, a prophecy that was supposedly found in an ancient Egyptian tomb was also invented:

> I, Thames, priest of Set, tell you this: She shall seem a snake to most men; she shall lead them to sin, and to their destruction. Yet she shall not be so. She shall be good and virtuous, and kind of heart; but she shall not seem so to most men. For she shall not be that which she appears! She shall be called [the Greek letter] Theta.[105]

Journalists were hardly fooled by any of this, but played along since it made good copy.[106] In her 1916 contract with Fox, some of the stipulations were: 'You must be heavily veiled while in public' and 'You can only go out at night'.[107] In an amusing parallel to how a British newspaper later (*The Sunday Express* in 1923) described Aleister Crowley, one press release

trumpeted her as 'The Wickedest Woman in the World', and in another an artist was recruited to designate her way of moving as 'wonderfully evil'.[108]

After the tremendous triumph at the box office of *A Fool There Was*, Bara starred in a rapid succession of similar films. Most of them are lost today, and what we know of them comes from reviews and, in some cases, preserved screenplays. In *The Devil's Daughter* (1915), based on a play by d'Annunzio (originally titled *La Gioconda*), Bara's character, after having been deserted by her fiancé, vows that 'as this man has done to me, so do I henceforth to all men'. The same year also saw the release of *The Clemenceau Case* (1915), which a reviewer characterized as being about a 'devil woman, lasciviously appealing, whose aim in life is to ruin her admirers'. For this film, according to another newspaper report, Bara developed a 'peculiar serpentine walk'. When *Lady Audley's Secret*—based on Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 novel about a girlish yet murderous bigamist—was launched, Bara was billed as 'the most wickedly beautiful face in the world'.[109] In *The Serpent* (1916), she played a Russian peasant girl who avenged herself on a duke who had wronged her.

She again appeared as an abused woman giving a male authority figure his just punishment in *Gold and the Woman* (1916), after which she, in the climactic scene, transformed into Satan amid 'red glow and sulfuric vapor'. Ohio newspaper *Plain Dealer* pronounced this film 'a glut of vice and an orgy of wickedness hitherto unattained even by the notorious Fox vampire'.[110] This film was (it would seem) the only instance when she was literally demonic on screen, but titles like *The She-Devil* (1918) and the aforementioned *The Devil's Daughter* nevertheless consistently tied her to such imagery in a more indirect manner, in spite of lacking actual straightforward diabolical content in the narrative presented. The headings of interviews and articles could also play up this devilish aspect, as in a 1915 *Photoplay* conversation with her titled 'Purgatory's Ivory Angel'.[111] *The Forbidden Path* (1918) saw her repeating the theme of feminine retribution, and, interestingly, as part of her scheme of reprisal she posed both as the Madonna and as 'Sin'—perhaps an allusion to Franz von Stuck's allegorical figure (see chapter 7).[112]

Her possibly grandest role was in the tremendously successful *Cleopatra* (1917), a spectacle that cost half a million dollars and had a cast of 30,000. In spite of being the year's biggest hit in cinemas, it also marked the

beginning of its star's descent from the heights of popularity. Here we again find the stereotypical connection between femme fatale and serpent, as Bara's costumes included a snake-adorned headpiece, serpent jewellery and a halter-top with a twin serpent motif.[113] The last high point of her silver screen trajectory was *Salome* (1918), which was not based on Wilde's play, though Bara herself explained she 'tried to absorb the artistic impulses of Oscar Wilde' anyway.[114] Eventually, her "vampire" persona had been exploited so much that the audience was no longer interested, and her career in the movies was effectively over by the end of 1919. She then made a less than successful attempt to launch a career in theatre, married film director Charles Brabin in 1921, and was henceforth more or less retired, though she played a couple of roles in minor films a few years later. Her projected comeback to the major league—announced in 1923—in a film called *Madam Satan* never came about (figure 9.10).[115]

During the five years that she made big movies, Bara was a pop culture phenomenon. She became the subject of numerous comedy songs and even gave rise to a dance ('The Vampire Walk') and a sandwich recipe.[116] Her fame was not confined to the United States. She was, for example, voted the most popular star in Japan, while a Brazilian newspaper commented on the 'Thedabaraism' sweeping the country.[117] Only four of her forty-two films, among them her first and last, *A Fool There Was* and the small-time *Madam Mystery* (unrelated to the unrealized *Madam Satan*), have been preserved in their entirety, though tiny fragments of some other titles also exist.[118] Bara is even so—perhaps because the persona in her case was always more important than the films as such—remembered as one of the major names in silent film, and was commemorated with a stamp by the US postal service in 1994.[119]

FIGURE 9.10 Theda Bara (Theodosia Goodman, 1885–1955). Publicity still from the early 1920s.

WOMEN, VENGEANCE, AND FEMME FATALE FEMINISM À LA BARA

It has been claimed that Bara appealed primarily to female spectators, and she herself suggested why in a May 1915 press release: 'V stands for Vampire and it stands for Vengeance, too. The vampire that I play is the vengeance of my sex upon its exploiters. You see, I have the face of a vampire, perhaps, but the heart of a "feministe." '[120] Cinema scholar Eve Golden dismisses that this should in any way be taken as evidence of Bara

being a feminist, a manner in which she says the quote has been employed for decades. First, Golden questions whether these words really were Bara's own, and secondly she argues that even if they were, 'they display the worst of men's fears about feminists' as 'vengeful, castrating harpies'.[121] The latter fact, however, would merely indicate Bara was not the particular sort of balanced feminist Golden likes. As for the first objection, that Bara was very far from being a (sinister) suffragette and had these words put in her mouth by someone else, there is indeed evidence pointing in this direction: she later gave up her career because her husband asked her to, and when queried in a 1917 interview whether women should be allowed to vote she answered that she had 'very great doubts as to the wisdom of universal suffrage'.[122] Yet, a few years on, in 1919, Bara again claimed she was an advocate of women's rights, explaining that she, 'being a feminist', was 'convinced that a woman's private life should be economically sound before she should indulge in her own romantic impulses'.[123] In 1921, she once more made statements indicating some sort of feminist inclinations: 'I am the champion of women. I do not think men have ever treated our sex fairly, even Nature has been against us from the start and is against us today. The woman always gets the worst of it from man, and always will, for this reason.'[124]

Her fickleness—or the changing whims of the Fox publicity department—regarding the question of feminism did not stop members of her audience from delighting in her wreaking havoc among males and paying them back for their male chauvinist misdeeds. One Felicia Blake, an avid Bara fan, was even inspired to write a feminist answer to Kipling's 'The Vampire', the misogynist poem that had served as the basis of *A Fool There Was*.[125] In the end, what is most interesting is not what Bara's own views were, but that she was constructed in publicity material as being a feminist, and that this would have publicly framed the devilish femme fatale roles she played as anti-patriarchal. Given the motifs incorporated in her persona—many of which (general morbidity, the snake as a recurring attribute, and so on) correlate to well-established tropes from Decadent Satanism—along with several indirect and some direct references to Satan, we could even, in a loose sense, call it a form of *Satanic* feminism. Clearly, however, it is a type of "feminist" persona many women today, like Eve Golden, will see as quite problematic (and this was doubtless the case among some contemporaries as well). While it cannot be taken as evidence of attitudes adopted by real

women, a description in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) is interesting as an example of the empowerment some audience members all the same likely attributed to Bara's persona. Fitzgerald describes a character who tries to 'resemble Theda Bara, the prominent motion picture actress. People told her constantly that she was a "vampire", and she believed them. She suspected hopefully that they were afraid of her, and she did her utmost under all circumstances to give the impression of danger.'[126] It is easy to imagine this would have been a type of inspiration many of Bara's real-life fans also may have felt she offered. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to study the reception of a figure like Bara among her admirers, since sources documenting it are hard to come by. Her public persona should be seen as having the same double-edged function as Bernhardt's, simultaneously subverting and supporting patriarchal discourses. This much, at least, seems a fairly safe assumption, even if we can never be sure of how much the scales tipped in either direction.

Displeased with being typecast, Bara quite early on demanded, and was given, more sympathetic roles. The audience, however, wanted her to be a sinister destroyer of males, not a rosy-cheeked heroine. Eventually fairly resigned to this fact, she proclaimed in 1917: 'During the rest of my screen career, I am going to continue doing vampires as long as people sin. For I believe that humanity needs the moral lesson and it needs it in repeatedly large doses.'[127] Elsewhere, she asserted: 'Every mother and minister owes me gratitude because every picture in which I appear has a clear moral. I am saving hundreds of girls from social degradation and wrongdoing.'[128] In almost complete contradiction to these claims, she explained in an interview with *American Magazine* (September 1920) that she saw herself as the 'embodiment of a secret dream which all of us have or have had', namely 'to love and be loved without counting the cost' and 'a desire to be beautifully wicked'.[129] The truth was in all likelihood somewhere in-between, as was the case with most of the ambiguous nineteenth-century literary examples of sympathy for the Devil that I have discussed. Her films, then, served simultaneous functions as conservative morality tales and playful indulgence in fantasies of wonderful sensuous wickedness and feminist retaliation. Her more enthusiastic elucidations (libertine and feminist as well as reactionary) of her screen work aside, Bara would later, in 1919, say that 'the word vampire became a stench in my cinematograph nostrils'.[130] When her movie

career was at an end, she also told a reporter about playing femme fatale roles: 'It was so foreign that I came to hate everything and everyone connected with it. I began to fear I would never like anyone I met again. . . . Being a vampire is a great hardship.'[131]

Similar to her predecessors Bernhardt and Casati, Bara had an exotic abode (a New York hotel room with props supplied by the Fox publicity department) filled with tiger-skin rugs, crystal balls, "occult" statuettes and skulls. This, however, was merely where press conferences were held. Her actual flat was nothing like this, instead being decorated in a very modern, discreet, and smart style.[132] Her real lifestyle was equally restrained. Unlike many of her movie star colleagues, Bara led a quiet life in private and was never involved in any scandals. At variance with most starlets, she had attended college for two years and was an obviously well-read and cultured person.[133] The public was seldom exposed to this side of her. When she relocated to Los Angeles in 1917, Fox had her large faux-Tudor house furnished in the same outrageous manner as the hotel room, among other things with a caged snake on a shelf, which she would fondle when reporters came calling.[134] That all this was part of an extended publicity campaign makes Bara very different from Bernhardt and Casati, with whom personal taste and a strong wish to abjure conventionality was the impetus for embracing the sinister.[135] Bara simply did her job, on-screen and off-screen.

Even so, it appears her audience at times had difficulties separating her screen persona from the actress herself (though perhaps some of the supposed instances of this were also part of the publicity game orchestrated by Fox), and she often felt compelled to supply protestations like the following in the press: 'The world must realize that I'm not a terrible creature stalking over the earth; I merely play the parts that will entertain.'[136] However, according to Eve Golden, by the close of 1915 everyone ('even her densest fans') was well aware that the fantastic background story was mere hokum. In Golden's view, not only newspapermen but the public 'thought it was such great harmless fun that no one objected'.[137] Somewhat indicating this may not always have been the case, in 1918 Bara was subpoenaed to give testimony in a murder trial on account of her expertise in vampire women (the judge, however, decided against this).[138] Golden's claim that the public from an early stage was fully able to discern fact from fanciful fiction regarding Bara is not substantiated with any empirical

evidence and would be difficult to prove. It therefore seems more a case of Golden herself thinking this is the reasonable position and therefore deeming it likely to also have been that of most contemporaries. That movie fans, who were as of yet unaccustomed to the schemes of publicity men (Bara being the first star to be constructed in this spectacular manner), were as perceptive as she assumes is far from given. Considering some of the strange tales about Bernhardt believed by more or less the same generation, it would be unsurprising if a similar credulity, or willing suspension of disbelief, applied to the Bara mythos.

Bara's career lasted from 1914 to 1919, the same period that World War I raged. After the war, artistic and literary movements like Symbolism and Decadence were all but dissipated. Bara's films in a way represent a transitional stage between the more supernatural femme fatales that were popular at the turn of the century and the purely secular ones that rose to prominence with the advent of genres like film noir in the early 1930s.[139] The Bara phenomenon can to some extent be viewed as part of a contemporary metamorphosis of dangerous women, from rebels against the morality of the church to rebels against a more secular societal morality. During World War I, a specifically Christian morality was still important enough for the diabolical to be a major feature in the language of mutiny against mores and conventions. The extra-filmic persona built up around Bara featured occult paraphernalia and serpents as props, film titles linked her to Satan and in one film she even appeared as the Devil himself in a literal sense. Yet, much in her persona also points forward to the secular film noir femme fatale.

It is difficult to determine the movie-going audience's response to Bara, beyond the fact that she was wildly popular, but it seems she was particularly well-liked by women. Important reasons for this were probably those suggested by Bara (or the Fox publicity men putting words in her mouth in one way or another): that she embodied common female fantasies about being 'beautifully wicked' and accomplishing a fearful 'feminist' retribution on the men who wronged women. Her films, then, offered both depictions of a longed-for vengeance on male chauvinists, and freedom from being good and submissive through daringly embracing one's sinfulness. These things, in 1914–1919, were still fairly closely bound up with Satanic imagery, in film titles as well as, for example, the imagery of serpents, which was consistently incorporated in the Bara persona, on-screen and off-screen.

Let us now look beyond the silver screen, the stage, the society columns, and the private parties of high aristocracy. The attributes—and the Satanic glamour they signified—of women like Bernhardt, Casati, and Bara were also sold as commercial goods in the form of serpent and demon jewellery. The popularity of such goods peaked around the year 1900, but I will approach the phenomenon here as part of a longer and broader societal trend: the rise of consumer culture. In Western countries, this culture's decisive breakthrough took place in the period 1860–1914.[140] It is perceived by many scholars as a process of democratization in the sense that, as economic historian Eminegül Karababa puts it, 'people of the middle classes and working classes living in cities and even in small towns started to consume small luxuries and fashionable items, and to take part in leisure pursuits'.[141] Earlier, these things had been reserved for a tiny elite. As for the gender dimension of this new culture, it also represented new opportunities for women to move freely outside the domestic sphere. Historian Günther Barth comments that 'the buying stage of shopping appeared as the most widely visible sign of female emancipation in the modern city'.[142] Since the late 1970s, research into nineteenth-century consumer culture has progressively moved away from the routine moralistic condemnations of 'hedonism' and 'capitalist mass culture' that earlier marked especially sociological studies. It has increasingly been acknowledged that the homogeneity believed to be fostered by the new patterns of consumption is in fact, as sociologist Rudi Laermans puts it, better understood as 'a heterogeneous mass of creative symbolic practices fuelled by individual imagination'.[143]

Creative symbolic practices, in a slightly more narrow sense than what Laermans has in mind, are of course exactly what we are interested in here. Developing the lines of thought proposed by Karababa, Barth, and Laermans, we could conceptualize the availability of the aforementioned jewellery as a sort of democratization of the charisma and subversiveness of the demonic feminine personae utilized by the famous and enormously rich. Self-fashioning and symbolic resistance became something to be bought and sold, which perhaps made it lose some of its power. But this development also meant that at least part of the rebellious personae constructed by an extravagant female elite was made more easily available to (relatively speaking) less privileged or imaginative women. A dash of feminine

demonic disruption could now be attained through a simple visit to a shop stocking the right goods.

By wearing jewellery depicting snakes or even devils, the female consumers were to some extent performing a demonic persona, though probably in very few cases to the degree that the main characters of this chapter did. All the same, it shows the allure this role must have held also to slightly more "ordinary" women. While the makers of these pieces—who chose the motifs—were almost always men, they would not have produced them unless there was a market. These were commercial designers, after all, who (in most cases) did not produce work for the sake of art, but to earn a living. One possibility is that such articles were typically something a man gave as a gift to a woman, thus bestowing a naughtily wicked appearance, which he felt was fetching, on his wife or mistress. The other option is that female consumers themselves bought or chose these products, of their own accord. As I have mentioned, an important part of the consumer culture that constitutes the context here was that women were able to go shopping on their own and make active choices regarding what they consumed.[144] The extent to which the choice of demonic jewellery was a rebellious gesture, and how much it simply represented a pandering to the taste among males for seductive Satanic sirens, is of course impossible to answer. The balance between subversion and internalization of negative stereotypes is constantly difficult to determine in the material treated in this study. One way of looking at the jewellery in question is as yet another expression of turn-of-the-century misogyny, an unwanted form of degrading ornamentation thrust upon women. However, I propose that we must take a more nuanced view and concede that it could also be seen as part of more or less subversive identity games that women engaged in.

In her interesting doctoral dissertation, Jennifer A. Myers has described how women's emancipatory struggles in inter-war Italy had connections to the development of a consumer culture. I believe this analysis has bearing on the situation in Europe at the turn of the century as well. What is the connection that Myers suggests, then? The democratization of fashion, where it became more affordable through the rise of ready-to-wear garments for women in the 1890s, was helpful, Myers argues, for those with a mind to dispute the dictates of social convention. They were now given new tools for self-fashioning and identity construction.[145] Jewellery was also an important part of this process of democratization, and several of the pieces we will

presently look at would have been fully affordable to members of the middle class.[146] Generally speaking, these goods were employed 'as signs of wealth, class, empire, gender roles and relations, and aesthetic refinement', as detailed by Jean Arnold in her study of Victorian identity and jewellery.[147] Arnold also emphasizes that in this age these items symbolized crucial cultural values and had a moral, social component. They embodied 'agreed upon cultural meanings' and functioned 'as a symbolic representation of the individual's relation to society'.[148] The identities that could be constructed through these means were, of course, not always in conformity with hegemonic ideals. They might equally well be subtly—or outright—subversive. At the time, there accordingly existed a literary tradition, expressed in texts by, for example, the leading English novelist George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans, 1819–1880), of using jewellery to symbolize 'a social identity that is opposed to conventional beliefs'.[149] This must have influenced how real women thought of such artefacts, which no doubt signified certain more or less clear ideas in accordance with the (largely) Christian consumer culture's "social agreement" on the meaning of, for example, serpent symbolism.[150] In this sense, as a marker of female rebellion with diabolical connotations, the jewellery that will be discussed (and the wearing of it) belongs firmly to the discourse of Satanic feminism.

THE SERPENT SLITHERS FROM THE TREE TO THE JEWEL BOX

Numerous pieces of jewellery depicting demonic motifs, typically produced by high-end craftsmen and designers, are documented. There were also less expensive versions available, but considerably less effort has been invested in preserving and cataloguing such specimens, which makes this end of the market difficult to study.[151] Most of the examples I will provide belong in the medium price range, where materials like silver were used instead of gold, and no gemstones of more precious varieties figure. Unlike their truly expensive counterparts, they were not unique handcrafted items, but cast or stamped.[152] Although the volumes produced were perhaps not huge, these were still, in a manner, mass-produced articles. They were thus possible to buy even for those with more modest economic resources than Luisa Casati and her peers. Nearly all pieces discussed here are in the art nouveau style, which was quite short-lived in jewellery, lasting from about 1895 to 1910.[153]

The most common fin-de-siècle jewellery with Satanic implications was that depicting snakes. A snake was not just a snake at this time. Especially if worn around the neck of a woman, it could hardly be reduced to merely an animal with a decorative, curving shape. The connotations to Satan and the narrative in Genesis 3 were much too prevalent, well-known, and topical in Western culture in this epoch.[154] This was due both to the still dominant position of Christianity and the many, frequently subversive, artistic reworkings of Eve's consorting with the Devil that were in circulation (and this should be kept in mind regarding the use of serpents by Bernhardt, Casati, and Bara as well). Naturally, the woman and snake motif also echoed other femme fatale figures popular at the time, for example, Medusa with her ophidian hair, Cleopatra (who supposedly took her own life using a poisonous snake), and Flaubert's Salammbô with her pet serpent, as portrayed in the eponymous 1862 novel. Nevertheless, as depicted in nineteenth-century art, even these figures frequently contained traces of the Eden story. Bram Dijkstra comments: 'the literally hundreds of painted and sculpted versions of Lilith, Salammbô, Lamia, and assorted other snake charmers came to blend as generic depictions of Woman, the eternal Eve'.[155] Some varieties of serpent motifs in jewellery were clearly not perceived as diabolical, however, as evidenced by the popularity of them in pieces where the reptilian creature was used as a symbol of eternity, signifying undying love. Queen Victoria's betrothal ring, for example, was shaped like a serpent for this reason.[156] This animal also carried connotations of a more carnal and sinful form of love. Its very shape as sculpted by art nouveau designers conveyed this, making 'its slithering body a metaphor for sensual movement', as Vivienne Becker puts it.[157] Other contemporary images, like Franz von Stucks's many wildly popular versions of *Die Sünde* (see chapter 7), also supported this meaning of the reptile and additionally connected the sexual dimension of the imagery directly to Satan.

As Fritz Falk points out in his comprehensive monograph on the topic, serpents were more or less absent from European jewellery for hundreds of years. He suggests this may have been because

> Christianity, the paramount religious faith in so many countries during those centuries, tended to associate the serpent with Evil and often equated it with the Devil. It would have been unimaginable or pointless to wear such a symbol of sin and Evil on one's body. No one—save possibly witches and warlocks—would have thought of adorning themselves with the sign of Satan.[158]

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, fear of the Devil had waned and snake rings, brooches, and so on became quite popular.[159] A century later, around 1900, they were seemingly especially prominent. I would suggest that this was not necessarily because the serpent was less directly tied to Satan at this time, as Falk argues (this connotation in fact remained strong), but because Satan himself had become something of a floating signifier that quite a few influential figures filled with a positive or ambivalent content in this era. These years also witnessed a new high-point of conscious provocations towards convention, when scores of women intentionally set out to ruffle the feathers of conservatives. There was, then, certainly a market for anti-conservative and controversial symbolic content in design. Satan and sinister serpents sold well, albeit to a select audience. What better adornments for individuals like the would-be Mme Chantelouves described by Jean Lorrain (see chapter 7)? As Stephen Escritt writes, '[i]t certainly seems there was a demand for jewellery with a hint of erotic danger and exoticism' and art nouveau artists and designers in general 'seemed to be hedonistically revelling in the moral panics of the day'.[160] Among these moral panics, we might conceivably count fears about Satanism, brought on, for example, by the practical joker Léo Taxil's books.[161]

The specifically feminine diabolical connotations are at their most explicit in pieces depicting Eve consorting with the serpent or reaching for the fruit growing on the prohibited tree. There are several such examples, for instance an intricate silver buckle where the face of Eve is encircled by the serpent, which is offering her an apple it holds in its mouth (Félix Rasumny, ca. 1900) (figure 9.11).[162] Eve smiles slightly and her flowing hair echoes the shape of the seducer, conflating the two and emphasizing their affinity. Jules Desbois's Eve buckle (ca. 1902) has her entwined by the serpent and the ground covered by apples (figure 9.12), while Edouard-Aime Arnould's Eve (ca. 1900), also adorning a buckle, is plucking an apple from a branch (figure 9.13). A spectacular enamel and silver brooch set with opals, entitled *Eve* (Henri-Ernest Dabault, 1901), shows its subject literally having a tête-à-tête with the tempter, almost looking like she is about to kiss him.[163] Another one, by an unidentified designer (ca. 1900), portrays Eve picking the forbidden fruit in the form of a diamond. David Lancaster views this motif as 'an expression of independence and rebellion well understood by women as the new century dawned'.[164] This indeed seems a reasonable reading, since the

opposite scenario—that a pious and submissive woman would wear this, for instance, to remind her of the sinfulness of her own sex—is not very likely, unless she was singularly masochistic. Even if that were the case, a defender of the conventional would hardly have found this narrative something to celebrate with a bold and luxurious adornment. The Eve jewellery hence appears to be a form of flaunting of female transgressiveness, using a diabolical symbolism to make the point. There is also a slight possibility that it might in some cases refer to Blavatsky's revaluation of the serpent as a Promethean hero, since several art nouveau artisans drew on Theosophical motifs when designing their pieces, for example, choosing colours to reflect different levels of spiritual development in accordance with this esoteric system.[165]

As Marilyn Nissenson and Susan Jonas point out, when discussing the serpent handbag that René Lalique probably created for Sarah Bernhardt, it 'was meant to be audacious, capitalizing on the emotionally charged association of snakes and women'.[166] This applies to all the pieces mentioned, which reflect an interest among quite a few women at the time in appropriating a demonic persona with Satanic overtones. We could, of course, ask, as I have already done, how subversive this persona was at the point that it became commercialized, and epigones of Bernhardt and Casati were roaming the streets of Paris adorned with gold and silver serpents. The short answer I would ultimately like to propose is: still very much so. If we consider the social climate of the period, the symbolism in question would have remained strongly provocative and rebellious despite the fact that it could be bought and sold in the form of jewel-studded precious metals in sinuous shapes. It should come as no surprise that many found motifs like the ones discussed highly improper and deplorable. In the contemporary debate, some voices even suggested representations of human figures and (certain) animals should be banned, with only, for example, butterflies and swallows being allowed.[167] As it were, outraged moralists had little say in the matter. Since there was obviously a lucrative market for these items, they continued being produced. In this manner, consumer culture helped spread what can be interpreted as expressions of Satanic feminism.

FIGURE 9.11 Eve and the serpent, silver buckle, Félix Rasumny, ca. 1900. Author’s collection.

FIGURE 9.12 Eve and the serpent, silver buckle, Jules Desbois, ca. 1902. Photo courtesy of Tadema Art Gallery, London.

FIGURE 9.13 Eve plucking the forbidden fruit, silver buckle, Edouard-Aime Arnould, ca. 1900. Photo courtesy of Tadema Art Gallery, London.

David Lancaster, writing about two 1895 dragon brooches (both probably by Plisson & Hartz), points out that they catered 'to the public love of controlled horror' that had become 'an established French fashion, which continued well into the 20th century'.[168] Considering this fashion, we can here again note that the dragon is a well-known symbol of Satan in Christian mythology, and that the serpent in Eden could be substituted for a dragon in visual representations, for example, in Rubens's famous 1638 etching of Adam and Eve.[169] There are also other examples of such iconographical overlaps and transfers. The conflation of the Greek god Pan and Satan has been discussed several times in earlier chapters, and it is therefore of interest that Pan featured prominently on jewellery as well, for instance, on a

Russian pendant (unidentified designer, ca. 1905) and on a German comb (Fritz Wolber, ca. 1900). On the latter, he is shown playing his pipes to a woman.[170] Another recurring motif in art nouveau is female figures with bat wings, found primarily in sculpture. It also appeared in the form of jewellery, such as a striking pendant (unidentified designer, ca. 1900).[171] In Christian iconography, bat wings are a characteristic attribute of demons, and there are really no other mythological or literary anthropoid creatures with such wings —except for vampires, but depictions of human-bat hybrid vampires did not appear on a large scale until a much later period than that in which the jewellery was produced. Hence, the most culturally well-grounded reading would be of this design as representing a demon woman. In a Christian iconographic context, bats had thoroughly negative connotations, and this is emphasized in designs like Philippe Wolfers's horrifying bat-woman (ca. 1899) whose head and feet are ensnared by serpents.[172] It might be a bit much to interpret such winged female figures as directly reflecting 'the hard-won emancipation of woman and her changing role in society', as Vivienne Becker does.[173] Yet, she is right in the sense that donning accessories depicting what many would have perceived as suggestive and offensive imagery of female demons was scarcely an act that affirmed one's compliancy and docility.

CONCLUDING WORDS

There are several other women discussed elsewhere in this study that we could think of as having intentionally assumed the role of the demon woman. Charlotte Dacre used the pseudonym Rosa Matilda, in probable reference to the succubus from Lewis's *The Monk*. Around the same time, Lady Caroline Lamb designated herself Biondetta, borrowing the name of the female Satan from Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*. Jean Lorrain's Madame Chantelouve admirers all claimed to be the Satanist lady from Huysmans's *Là-bas*. Renée Vivien kept pet snakes and toads, lived in a gloomy apartment with the windows nailed shut and wrote lesbian paeans to Satan. Mary Wigman choreographed a *Hexentanz*, enacting the witch on stage. Mary MacLane (to whom the next chapter is dedicated) proclaimed she wanted to marry the Devil. Aside from these individuals, all putting in an appearance here, there are numerous others. In early cinema we find sundry femme fatale stars aside

from Theda Bara, for example, Asta Nielsen (1881–1972). These other actresses, however, did not incorporate their demonic on-screen persona into an off-screen one—their performances of "evil" were completely confined to the realm of fiction. But many women aside from our examples did conflate performance and private life to an extreme extent. For instance, in the same circles as Casati, there moved other females of a similarly theatrical bent, such as the Russian dancer and actress Ida Rubinstein (1885–1960), another of d'Annunzio's lovers. It has been said of Rubinstein that she projected a 'majestic and mysterious air', and treated 'life itself as a theatrical production'. However, her persona was never quite as demonic as that of Casati, although she commissioned an opera named *Lucifer, ou Le Mystère de Caïn* ('Lucifer, or the Mystery of Cain').[174] In Weimar Berlin, Anita Berber (1899–1928) was the queen of sin. Like Rubinstein, she was a dancer and actress who actively made daily life synonymous with theatrical performance, but she was more interested than her Russian colleague in systematically cultivating immorality and darkness as parts of her persona.[175]

Women like Bernhardt, Casati, Vivien, Rubinstein, and Berber seem to have belonged to a special category of headstrong, self-consciously mannered figures. They carved out a space for themselves in society where they could enjoy considerable freedom. Naturally, we must also keep in mind that they were mostly rich and at times aristocratic to begin with (Berber, who incidentally met a singularly bad end, is an exception), which clearly helped their struggle for personal liberty. The extreme eccentricity of the rich would probably often have been deemed little more than madness in a penniless woman. Others, like Bara, occupied—at least seemingly—a similar space of generous leeway, but did not carve it out themselves and did not choose the femme fatale tools used for the carving. Nor did they acquire much actual freedom, but this may, in Bara's case, also have something to do with the well-adjusted and quite conventional actress not having a particular desire for liberation from the rules of society in the first place.

It is distinctly possible that Bernhardt, Casati, and others incorporated serpents, demons, and so on as part of their personae in a deliberate and calculated way, that went well beyond striving to shock for sheer enjoyment. Since these were symbols of opposition to the conventional morality that Christianity was the guardian of, which these women clearly rejected in their choice of lifestyle, their use of such emblems of evil can reasonably be seen as a symbolic repudiation of said social mores. It is at least certain that few

would choose to employ Satanic, or for that matter more generally dark and disquieting, motifs unless they are courting attention in some way. Bernhardt and Casati, provocateurs and notoriety-seekers of the highest order, are extreme instances of this. The attention-grabbing effect is part of what makes Satanism and assorted diabolical symbolism a powerful tool, as explained by, for example, Blavatsky and evidenced by the successful accomplishment of notoriety through it by Mary MacLane (see chapter 10) and others.

Satanism, or flirting with the Satanic, also has another important dimension: at its root, it is a language of resistance to conventions, a counter-discourse. This language may be more or less articulate—or seriously meant—when it comes to specific cultural criticism. It is worth stressing that the strategies employed by the women in this chapter can hardly be seen as well-developed political feminist discourse in symbolic form. The individuals in question may even have been acting unconsciously to some extent, simply appropriating an existing bundle of imagery with certain implications. It seems highly unlikely, at least, that they thoughtfully sat down and devised imagery to employ for political ends. These were, after all, markedly individualistic and non-political projects and identity games. But even that which is conceived for personal use only, so to speak, will have broader ramifications when one is a public or socially high-profile figure. In accordance with my analysis of Blavatsky in chapter 4, we can view these personae as potential sources of inspiration to feminists as well as a contribution to the destabilization of gender roles. This holds equally true even if these effects were not part of a deliberate political plan concocted by the individuals in question. The use of Gothic and Satanic symbolism by fiercely independent women would have resonated with certain notions in the wider culture, and in the case of figures as highly public as these it must have created echoes far beyond their intimate sphere. It thus strengthened the ties between such symbolism and female independence. We should accordingly consider it part of the puzzle we need to lay to understand how the two became intertwined both in (more or less) feminist texts—by women like Renée Vivien, Matilda Joslyn Gage, George Egerton, Ada Langworthy Collier, Mary MacLane, and Sylvia Townsend Warner—and in anti-feminist polemics proclaiming suffragettes the spawn of Satan.

It would be far-fetched and utterly misguided to claim that the women discussed in this chapter were Satanists, in any reasonable sense of the word. Yet, all of them played with symbolism of that kind, or closely related to it,

in the construction of their public image. Bernhardt loved dark Romanticism, perhaps slept in a coffin, wore a bat hat and serpent jewellery, at times derided Christianity, and even sculpted a self-portrait of herself as a sort of Satan or demon. Casati practised magic and threw curses, attached horns to her head, dressed up as Satan in the Garden of Eden, kept serpents as pets, commissioned a mural of herself as Eve consorting with Lucifer and organized parties with staff in devil costumes. Bara was presented by the Fox publicity department as a real-life demon woman, and in her films played vampiric femme fatales who punished males. Several of the films had titles where Satan was mentioned, and in one of them she even turned out, literally, to be the Devil in disguise. All three women were closely connected with serpents: likened to them by the press, having them as pets, wearing jewellery with this shape, and so on. In the context at hand, especially considering the explicit Satanic elements present elsewhere in the pursuits of these individuals, serpents would have signalled, among other things, a link to Satan's guise in the Garden of Eden and his interaction with Eve.

When it comes to feminist credentials, Bernhardt and Casati transgressed gender boundaries and discarded most notions of what was appropriate for women, which made at least the former a popular figure with feminists. Bara's sensuous performances and undoing of men on screen—as well as her ominous off-screen persona—also made her an antithesis to the 'angel in the house', albeit one who only performed this wickedness as part of her job, and acting on careful instructions from directors and publicity men. Perhaps on their command, or of her own accord, she also made several feminist statements, and her female fans delighted in her annihilation of deserving men in the films. Taking all this into account, it is reasonable to see Bernhardt, Casati, and Bara as participants in the amorphous and ambiguous discourse of Satanic feminism.

This also applies to those unknown women who wore jewellery depicting serpents, demons, the Fall, and so on. It seems unreasonable to read the wearing of a piece like Félix Rasumny's Eve buckle as anything else than (in some sense) a celebration of Eve's transgression, with a plethora of attendant implications. We cannot know for sure exactly what these items were felt to signal in the eyes of the apparently quite many (judging by the extensive range of varieties available) women adorning themselves thus. It must,

however, have been a token of rebellion to some extent, and clearly drew on motifs familiar from Satanic feminism.

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[1] Quoted in Prusak 1974, p. 101.

[2] The early 1870s is the starting point, since this was when Sarah Bernhardt truly began her ascent to fame. The year 1932 is the finishing point because this was the year when Luisa Casati was declared bankrupt and had to relinquish her extravagant lifestyle. Theda Bara's career took place chiefly from 1914 to 1921. Demonic motifs in jewellery had its golden age in the decades immediately preceding and following the year 1900. For a discussion of Bernhardt and Casati that takes Roland Barthes's analysis of secular mythologies as its starting point, see Faxneld 2014b.

[3] Bernhardt's exact birth date is not known, since the official records were destroyed in a fire, and she herself was notoriously unreliable regarding such issues. She was most likely born sometime between 1841 and 1844. Gottlieb 2010, p. 1.

[4] Bergman-Carton 1996, p. 58.

[5] Bernier 1984, p. 38.

[6] Roberts 2002, p. 228.

[7] Glenn 2000, p. 36.

[8] Marcus 2011, p. 1011.

[9] Glenn 2000, p. 14.

[10] Ibid., p. 20.

[11] Bergman-Carton 1996, p. 59; Roberts 2002, p. 174.

[12] Gottlieb 2010, p. 186. John Stokes also comments on Bernhardt's preference for Romanticism, and further emphasizes that it was its late variety, in the shape of Symbolism, which she would draw on in the middle and late stages of her career. Stokes 1988, p. 30.

[13] Roberts 2002, p. 168.

[14] Glenn 2000, pp. 29–30.

[15] Roberts 2002, pp. 104, 198–200, 228.

[16] Ibid., p. 166.

[17] Ibid., p. 168. There were persistent rumours about Bernhardt herself having lesbian relationships, which may have had some foundation in fact, and this was the subject of several *romans á clef* (Gottlieb 2010, p. 88; Gold & Fizdale 1991, p. 134). This, too, must have furthered her popularity with this minority.

[18] Gottlieb 2010, pp. 137–138. She also played more pious roles, for example, a courtesan who meets Christ and is saved in Edmond Rostand's *La Samaritaine* (1897). Other parts she performed, which also constitute important counter-examples to her femme fatale roles, include Joan of Arc and the Virgin Mary. It is worth noting, however, that her taking on these parts at times aroused anger among critics, who felt she was dishonouring the figures in question. She was decidedly most famous for performing more wicked characters. Roberts 2002, p. 212.

[19] Gilman 1993, p. 203; Gold & Fizdale 1991, pp. 246–247 (the latter authors give a slightly more complicated description of the issue of whether Wilde wrote the part for her).

[20] Stokes 1988, pp. 24, 53. On Bernhardt and Rollinat, see Bernier 1984, pp. 37–38.

[21] Sitzia 2007. Sitzia does not specify exactly what 'Decadent bestiaries' she is referring to, if indeed she has a specific work in mind. It could also be that she refers to a more general conception current among Decadents.

[22] Nissenson & Jonas 1995, pp. 133, 146–147.

[23] Gottlieb 2010, pp. 82–83.

[24] Ibid., pp. 83–85. Ockman dates the photo to ca. 1880 (Ockman 2005, p. 51). On the coffin, its origins, and the photo, see also Bernier 1984, pp. 89–90; Roberts 2002, p. 185; Gold & Fizdale 1991, pp. 113–115.

[25] Ockman & Silver 2005, p. 13.

[26] Mucha quoted in Gottlieb 2010, p. 82.

[27] Bergman-Carton 2005, p. 106.

[28] Loti quoted in Gold & Fizdale 1991, p. 217.

[29] Guillemot 1891, p. 98.

[30] Robertson quoted in Gold & Fizdale 1991, p. 237.

[31] Guillemot 1891, p. 100.

[32] Gottlieb 2010, pp. 75, 107, 157. The last of these two may, of course, have been the source for Casati's subsequent similar choice of pets.

[33] Roberts 2002, p. 185.

[34] Quoted in Glenn 2000, p. 30.

[35] Gottlieb 2010, pp. 84–87.

[36] It seems probable Bernhardt may indeed have given it the sphinx title, with reference to the play *Le Sphinx* by Octave Feuillet, which she performed in 1873 and later as part of her touring programme.

[37] Ockman (2005, p. 47) describes it as having a griffin's body, bat's wings, and a fish's tail. Bernier (1984, p. 15) interprets it simply as a bat with the head of Bernhardt. Suffice to say, exactly what the little sculpture portrays is difficult to determine.

[38] Quoted in Collins 2008, p. 28.

[39] Quoted in Roberts 2002, p. 172.

[40] Lemaître quoted in Gold & Fizdale 1991, p. 215.

[41] Roberts 2002, pp. 191–192; Menon 2006, pp. 261–265. Another example is the popular song 'Le Petit serpent de Sarah' (Stokes 1988, p. 44; Ockman and Silver 2005, p. 13; Ockman 2005, p. 196). An important reason for this connection to the snake was Bernhardt's famed thinness.

[42] Satan as a serpent-woman hybrid handing Eve the forbidden fruit was a common motif in visual art for several centuries, as discussed in chapter 2.

[43] Quoted in Glenn 2000, pp. 37–38.

[44] Ibid., p. 38.

[45] Gold & Fizdale 1991, p. 70; Bernier 1984, pp. 82–83.

[46] Moreover, the female demon that manifests itself in the sabbath scene in *Méphistophéla* might very well be inspired by Bernhardt's *Encrier fantastique*.

[47] Quoted in Haught 1996, p. 197. In her early teens, while still in the convent school, Bernhardt claimed to have had a vision of the Virgin Mary and wanted to become a nun. Her mother's current lover, however, interpreted this as a display of exhibitionism (probably a fully correct analysis) and she was instead sent to an acting school. Arwas 2000/2006, p. 43.

[48] Gold & Fizdale 1991, p. 124. The specific topic being discussed was a photograph Bernhardt had taken from an album of his, which he held sacred. It seems he refers, however, to a general attitude on her part.

[49] Cf. Glenn 2000, p. 20, where she details how Bernhardt appealed 'particularly to women who had one foot in the camp of moral rectitude and another in the world of experimentation'. It also seems reasonable that the actress may have appealed to women with a more decided loyalty to only one of these two camps, but for vastly different reasons.

[50] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 167. Aside from the fascinating and well-researched 1999 biography of Casati by Ryersson and Yaccarino (and their 2009 visual companion to it), the only other full-length study of her is in Italian, which I unfortunately am not able to read.

[51] For examples of how Casati's doings were covered by the press, see the 1922 article by Adolph de Meyer in *Harper's Bazar* (Meyer 1922), the richly illustrated 1926 piece in the *San Francisco Chronicle* ([Anonymous], 18 April 1926, 'Italy's Famous Beauty Who Lives Like a Fairy Princess') and two articles in the American edition of *Vogue* (Meyer 1916; [Anonymous], 1 October 1927, 'The Marchesa Casati Gives a Fête of Ancient Splendor in Her Rose Palace Outside of Paris').

[52] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 137.

[53] Ibid., pp. 6–11; Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, pp. 25–26, 33.

[54] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 20.

[55] Jullian 1970, p. 425.

[56] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 14; Ryersson and Yaccarino 2009, p. 37. During her travels, Casati would send D'Annunzio postcards. A typical example is one from the British Museum declaiming about the image on it: 'These are the two most powerful and evil mummies' (Ryersson and Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 98). On d'Annunzio and Casati, see also Jullian 1970, p. 419; Woodhouse 1998, pp. 236–237.

[57] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 15–16.

[58] Ibid., p. 135.

[59] Ibid., p. xiii.

[60] Ibid., pp. 24, 124–126. Marinetti's futurist manifesto was written in her Rome villa and was dedicated to his patroness. On Casati and futurism, see pp. 77–81.

[61] Ibid., pp. 28–29. Quote on p. 29. On anti-Giocondas, see Faxneld 2016.

[62] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 37.

[63] Arwas 1979, pp. 6, 90; Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 68.

[64] Jullian 1970, p. 425.

[65] Arwas 1979, p. 13.

[66] Jullian 1970, p. 424.

[67] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 35, 57, 79.

[68] Ibid., p. 43.

[69] Ibid., pp. 102–103.

[70] [Anonymous], 'Italy's Famous Beauty Who Lives Like a Fairy Princess', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 April 1926.

[71] Wistow 1987, p. 16; Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 122; Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, p. 127. The name of the painter was José-Maria Sert (1874–1945), known, for example, for his murals in the Rockefeller Center in New York City.

[72] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 145.

[73] Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, p. 140.

[74] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 55.

[75] Meyer 1922, p. 112.

[76] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 50, 57–58. Quote on p. 58.

[77] Ibid., p. 127; Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, pp. 129–131.

[78] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 57.

[79] Ibid., p. 79.

[80] Ibid., pp. 146–147.

[81] Duncan 1927, p. 259.

[82] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 58, 82, 84.

[83] Jullian 1972, p. 281; Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 84. Jullian (1970, p. 427) gives a different date for this (1918) and mentions the presence of an unnamed magician who assisted the couple with the ritual.

[84] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 84.

[85] Jullian 1970, p. 424.

[86] Jullian 1972, p. 183.

[87] Jangfeldt 2008, pp. 242–243; Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 100–102, 105, 121. Munthe was very irritated with his tenant, whom he called 'one of the lowest type[s] of women I ever came across', and at one point expressed his 'desire to seize her by her red perruque and scalp her and fling her degenerated carcass over the precipe' (Munthe quoted in Jangfeldt 2008, p. 243). He was hardly less irritated after her unannounced arrival at his home one day, where she left a black velvet sack as a gift, which, when opened by his children after she had departed, turned out to contain two genuine shrunken human heads (Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 110). Neither Jangfeldt nor Ryersson and Yaccarino mention the probable origin of the motto in Lévi or Crowley. Cf. Lévi [1855]/1930, p. 109 (who gives the words in the order 'Savoir, Oser, Vouloir, Se taire'); Crowley 1991, p. 158.

[88] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 105.

[89] Ibid., p. 107.

[90] On this shortage of documentation, see Ryersson and Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. xiii.

[91] Jullian 1970, pp. 378, 428–429; Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 156, 179–180. Angry with photographer Cecil Beaton, she received a message from the otherworld saying 'I HAVE KILLED BEATON I AM NOW TAKING FURTER [*sic*] MANNER TO DESTROY HIM. DEMON. GIVE YOU TRIUMPH OVER HORRIBLE PERSON' (the channelled message is believed to be in the handwriting of an associate of the Marchesa, not her own hand). Seemingly, then, she practiced some form of 'black magic' at this time (Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, pp. 170–171). In London, as it happened, she finally met Aleister Crowley. The two did not get along. Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 165.

[92] Quoted in Jullian 1972, p. 182. The theme of transformation was expressed in visual form in *Un lent réveil après des metempsychoses* ('A Slow Awakening after Metempsychosis'), Alberto Martini's 1912 portrait of Casati.

[93] Heilbrun 2000, p. 80.

[94] Ibid., pp. 79–80.

[95] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, p. 51.

[96] Barnes 2010, p. 31.

[97] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 75, 108–111; Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, p. 75.

[98] Ryersson & Yaccarino 1999/2004, pp. 18, 43; Ryersson & Yaccarino 2009, p. 37. Another role model for Casati was the Countess de Castiglione (1837–1899), an Italian aristocrat known for her flamboyant outfits—and the elaborately staged photographs of herself wearing them that she commissioned. Castiglione was the subject of a 1913 book by Casati's friend the Comte de Montesquiou, who had spent years researching his topic. Casati's lover d'Annunzio wrote the preface to the book. Several commentators have remarked that Casati modelled herself on Castiglione, and indeed she even appeared as her at a 1924 ball. Heilbrun 2000, pp. 76–79.

[99] Assmann 2000, pp. 188–203.

[100] Gaertner 1970, pp. 27–28.

[101] Jullian 1972, p. 183.

[102] Genini 1996, p. 2. There are two full-length biographies of Bara, Ronald Genini's *Theda Bara* and Eve Golden's *Vamp*, both published in 1996. Genini offers many interesting details, but Golden's book is more critical of the sources used and hence more reliable.

[103] Genini 1996, p. 16. For an extensive discussion of *A Fool There Was*, see Dijkstra 1996, pp. 9–47.

[104] Genini 1996, pp. 16–18, 22–23, 55; Golden 1996/1998, p. 57.

[105] Genini 1996, p. 18; Golden 1996/1998, p. 129.

[106] Genini 1996, p. 17.

[107] Ibid., p. 19. Golden completely repudiates the idea that this was a real contract and counts it among the gimmicks intended to bolster her exotic persona. Golden 1996/1998, pp. 110–111.

[108] Golden 1996/1998, p. 57. For a later press release, a phrenologist was called in to say that Bara 'has the muscular system of a serpent', while her face showed 'wickedness and evil' and 'characteristics of the vampire and the sorceress' (p. 63).

[109] Genini 1996, pp. 28–29; *The Devil's Daughter* quote from Golden 1996/1998, p. 54.

[110] Genini 1996, pp. 33–35. Quotes on pp. 34–35.

[111] Golden 1996/1998, p. 64; Genini 1996, p. 35.

[112] Genini 1996, p. 45.

[113] Golden 1996/1998, p. 135; Genini 1996, pp. 39–40.

[114] Genini 1996, p. 47.

[115] Ibid., pp. 90, 94. On the topic of Satanic titles recurring later in her life, we can also note that she herself wrote a play called *The Red Devil* (p. 111). There is a 1930 film by Cecil B. DeMille (produced by MGM, not Fox) with the title *Madam Satan*, but this is probably a completely different production based on a different script.

[116] Golden 1996/1998, p. 161; Genini 1996, p. 77.

[117] Golden 1996/1998, p. 181.

[118] Golden 1996/1998, pp. 238–239. Genini states that only two exist in complete form today. Genini 1996, p. 125.

[119] Golden 1996/1998, p. 241; Genini 1996, p. 126.

[120] Quoted in Golden 1996/1998, p. 105.

[121] Ibid., p. 105.

[122] Quoted in ibid., p. 105.

[123] Quoted in Dijkstra 1996, p. 282.

[124] Golden 1996/1998, p. 210.

[125] Ibid., pp. 106–107.

[126] Fitzgerald 1922, p. 83.

[127] Quoted in Genini 1996, p. 29.

[128] Quoted in ibid., p. 78.

[129] Quoted in ibid., pp. 57–58.

[130] Ibid., p. 43.

[131] Golden 1996/1998, p. 200.

[132] Genini 1996, p. 59; Golden 1996/1998, p. 50.

[133] Genini 1996, p. 6.

[134] Golden 1996/1998, p. 127.

[135] In Bernhardt's case, an excellent instinct for good publicity may, of course, have been an almost as important factor as her private inclinations.

[136] Genini 1996, p. 96.

[137] Golden 1996/1998, pp. 67, 131.

[138] Ibid., p. 164.

[139] The 'start date' of the film noir genre is debatable, but the early 1930s is one reasonable suggestion. For a discussion of this, see Vernet 1993, p. 15.

[140] On the dating of the rise of consumer culture, see Laermans 1993, p. 80.

[141] Karababa 2012, p. 195. Émile Zola famously dedicated his entire novel *Au bonheur des dames* ('The Ladies' Delight', 1882) to the topic of the department store and described it as a cathedral of commerce, in which women indulged in a new female religion: shopping. Laermans 1993, pp. 81, 88.

[142] Barth 1980, p. 137. Cf. Laermans 1993, p. 94. For a more negative interpretation of the phenomenon in terms of gender and power, see pp. 95–96.

[143] Laermans 1993, p. 79. This development pertains to the study of consumer culture in later periods as well.

[144] Since their husbands or fathers were still in ultimate control of economic matters (and had to earn the money spent by the women), females buying beyond their means often caused serious conflicts in families (Laermans 1993, p. 96). One can only imagine the kind of conflicts that might have resulted from wives or daughters in conservative families purchasing jewellery that could be seen as an indication of some sort of Satanic feminism.

[145] Myers 2011, pp. 80–84, passim. The dating of the break-through for ready-to-wear women's clothes is from Green 1997, p. 42. Ready-to-wear men's clothes had become popular much earlier, since they were less ornate and did not require as precise a fit. Zakim 2009, pp. 265–288.

[146] On the democratization of jewellery in the nineteenth century, see Arnold 2011, p. 5.

[147] Ibid., p. 7.

[148] Ibid., pp. 9, 20. Quote on p. 20.

[149] Ibid., p. 27.

[150] Cf. ibid., p. 39.

[151] On such cheaper varieties, see Menon 2006, pp. 252, 324. For examples of truly high-end turn-of-the-century serpent jewellery, see Lancaster 1996, p. 53 (designer unknown, ca. 1895); Wittlich 2000/2006, p. 72 (Alphonse Mucha, 1902); Nissenson & Jonas 1995, p. 6 (Georges Fouquet, 1902), p. 112 (René Lalique, ca. 1898–99), p. 131 (René Lalique, 1903–5); Arwas 2002, pp. 340–341 (René Lalique, year unknown). As can be seen by the recurrence of Lalique's name in the examples, he was probably the prime designer of jewellery with serpent motifs at the turn of the century (at least in the premium segment of the market).

[152] Parts of the process would still have required considerable craftsmanship, in contrast with the manufacture of the genuinely cheap items that will not be treated due to the difficulties with finding documentation of them.

[153] Becker 1985, p. 9.

[154] On the continued importance of the Eden narrative in nineteenth-century France (where most of the jewellery under discussion was produced), see e.g. Menon 2006.

[155] Dijkstra 1986, p. 307. See also Menon 2006, pp. 227–273; Karlin 2008, p. 35; Thompson 1971–72, p. 164.

[156] Dawes & Davidov 1991, pp. 65–66.

[157] Becker 1985, p. 17. On the serpent as a dangerously erotic symbol in the period, see Karlin 2008, p. 35.

[158] Falk 2008, p. 75.

[159] Ibid., pp. 75–79.

[160] Escritt 2000/2002, pp. 93–94. See also Markovitz (2008, pp. 17–18) for more on the dark and edgy side of art nouveau jewellery.

[161] On Taxil, see Medway 2001, pp. 9–17; Luijk 2013, pp. 241–323.

[162] Becker 1985, pp. 231, 236; Arwas 2002, pp. 363–364.

[163] Escritt 2000/2002, pp. 90–93. Canz (1976, p. 87) mentions two further pieces bearing the title *Eve*, by the Belgian designer Philippe Wolfers. She claims that 'portrayals of Eve are otherwise rare' ('Darstellungen der Eva sind im übrigen selten'). The several examples I have found, seven in total, would indicate otherwise and I find it likely that such pieces were not exceedingly rare, something also borne out by conversations I have had with antique dealers in London, Berlin, Prague, Paris, and New York specializing in art nouveau jewellery.

[164] Lancaster 1996, p. 60.

[165] Karlin 2008, p. 27. Karlin unfortunately does not specify exactly which artisans she has in mind.

[166] Nissenson & Jonas 1995, pp. 133–134.

[167] Becker 1985, p. 65.

[168] Lancaster 1996, p. 48. A German dragon belt buckle (Julius Müller-Salem, ca. 1904) can be seen in Falk 2008, p. 62.

[169] Perlove & Silver 2009, pp. 70–71.

[170] Lancaster 1996, p. 63; Falk 2008, p. 61. Another example (designer unknown, ca. 1900), which may be either Pan or a satyr, is reproduced in Lancaster 1996, p. 47.

[171] Arwas 2002, pp. 374–375. For further examples of this motif in jewellery, see Falk 2008, p. 128; Karlin 2008, p. 36; Canz 1976, pp. 276–277.

[172] Canz 1976, pp. 123, 128–129, 276. Wolfers gave his pendant the title *Vampire* (p. 128), which would after all indicate a connection between the bat-woman and the blood-sucking fiend of tales like Gautier's 'La Morte amoureuse'. The serpents make it clear that this is an explicitly Satanic vampire woman.

[173] Becker 1985, p. 18.

[174] Mayer 1988, p. 46.

[175] Berber, a very famous scandalous figure in her day, appeared in a seemingly lost film called *Lucifer* (Ernest Juhn, 1921), that I have not been able to find any details about, and the horror film *Unheimliche Geschichten* ('Eerie Tales', Richard Oswald, 1919). She had lesbian affairs, took huge amounts of drugs, enjoyed going out to dinner nude underneath her sable coat (with a baby chimpanzee hanging around her neck), coloured her navel red, wore men's trousers, and so on. These antics were reported in detail by the press, and widely imitated by young Berlin females. However, she was also a serious artist, who choreographed morbid Expressionist dance pieces, which unfortunately were little understood or appreciated by her audience, attracted by her reputation as Sin incarnate. Gordon 2006, pp. 68, 74, 113, 142.

I have never understood why people who can swallow the enormous improbability of a personal God boggle at a personal Devil. I have known so intimately the way that demon works in my imagination.

GRAHAM GREENE, *The End of the Affair* (1951)[1]

10

Mary MacLane's Autobiographic Satanic Feminism

INTRODUCTION

Having considered the implications of the demonic femme fatale roles that several nineteenth-century women assumed, we will now turn to a detailed case study of an individual whose fame was based on the presentation of such a persona: Canadian-American Mary MacLane (1881–1929). Her bestseller *The Story of Mary MacLane* (1902) is a highly calculated attempt to provoke, titillate, and make some feminist statements in the process. Central to the text is the author's burning desire to become Satan's bride, and the exclamation 'I am awaiting the coming of the Devil' is repeated over and over again, with subtle variations, through the entire work, like a sort of refrain.[2] Earlier research on MacLane has more or less neglected the fact that her use of Satan is quite clearly directly related to an established tradition of literary Satanism and also overlaps with contemporary esoteric and political use of the figure.[3] This chapter attempts to contextualize her work from this perspective. MacLane's use of several by now familiar motifs will be highlighted: the liberating demon lover, Satan as a voice of cultural criticism, diabolical lesbianism, and so on. I will also consider the reception of the text in-depth, detailing how MacLane's contentious public persona was an important part of the (brief) success she enjoyed and how she became an anti-heroine role model to scores of young American women.

The Story of Mary MacLane—presented as a diary covering 13 January 1901 to 13 April the same year—should hardly be read as a direct unmediated pouring forth of MacLane’s innermost thoughts, though this might be an aspect of it too. Although it is supposed to be a diary, a partial autobiography of sorts, it is as much a work of fiction as Huysmans’s novels about Durtal’s involvement with Satanists and subsequent conversion to Catholicism, or Strindberg’s seemingly demented ravings in *Inferno* (1897).[4] This doubleness, typical of the (semi-) autobiographical and diary genres, is also held up by the author herself: ‘Oh, do not think for an instant that this analysis of my emotions is not perfectly sincere and real, and that I have not felt all of them more than I can put into words. … But in my life, in my personality, there is an essence of falseness and insincerity.’[5] In spite of this veneer of fabrication and fraudulence often being difficult to penetrate, we will begin by establishing some basic facts concerning Mary MacLane the person.

Mary MacLane was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where her father held a government position. The family was well-off and lived in a large house with servants. When she was four, they moved to Minnesota, where her father died four years later. Her mother remarried after a few years, and they settled in Butte, Montana, in the mid-1890s. Young Mary read voraciously though somewhat indiscriminately—from Nick Carter to Confucius—and edited the Butte High School paper for two years. On her graduation in 1899, she had achieved proficiency in Latin, Greek, and French.[6] She was nineteen when she wrote her soon-to-be notorious book and sent it off to a Chicago-based publisher of evangelical literature. This may have been a mistake, or possibly MacLane believed they would be receptive to the biblical symbolism used (in spite of the decidedly anti-Christian tone of the text). Surprisingly, the company’s vice-president was impressed by her writing and passed it on to Herbert S. Stone & Co., a publishing house with a self-conscious “Decadent” reputation, which was also known for bringing out shocking women writers like Kate Chopin. Very quickly, according to one account in a single week, they accepted the manuscript, edited it, and had it printed.[7] Much to MacLane’s chagrin they did not allow her to keep the original title: *I Await the Devil’s Coming*.[8]

In spite of the less offensive title, the book caused a scandal and, as such books often do, sold extremely well. Within a month, 80,000 copies changed hands supposedly earning its author $15,000 in royalties. It was translated into over thirty languages and soon became the subject of satirical cartoons and popular songs (more of its repercussions in popular culture further on). The fact that the father of the brothers running Herbert S. Stone & Co. was the head of the Associated Press surely had something to do with this immense impact. On 27 April 1902, newspapers across the country ran reviews of the book, which would hardly have been likely otherwise for a completely unknown author.[9] MacLane travelled widely to promote her opus of self-observation and gave huge amounts of interviews, always filled with provocative and frequently rude statements. The type of publicity surrounding the book assured that it was classified as sensational literature. As Kathryne Tovo stresses, under different circumstances, 'audiences might have greeted *The Story of Mary MacLane* as an aesthetically complex work of literary experimentation rather than a popular scandal'.[10] The style of the text is indeed unorthodox and experimental, and today reads like a clear example of what we would call literary modernism.

After five months of frantic media attention, the spotlights turned elsewhere. In the years that followed, MacLane re-emerged from time to time, but would never again reach a comparable level of celebrity. Her second book, *My Friend Annabel Lee* (1903), had little of the outrageous content of the debut book, and a reviewer stated that the author had apparently become 'sane and conservative' (figure 10.1). Unsurprisingly, the book did not sell well.[11] Her third and final book, *I, Mary MacLane: A Diary of Human Days* (1917), appeared fifteen years later. It is a piece of introspection similar to the first, though Satan is absent, and failed to return MacLane's name to the bestseller lists. In late 1917, riding on the crest of this very slight comeback, she wrote and starred as herself in the lavish film *Men Who Have Made Love to Me* (released 1918). To a limited degree, MacLane hereby finally managed to cause an outrage once more. For example, the Board of Censors in Ohio banned the movie, feeling it was harmful to public morality. It was all the same apparently not scandalous enough to lure a sufficient amount of customers into the movie houses to give MacLane a lasting career in cinema.[12]

For most of her life after the first book, MacLane was in dire financial straits, eking out a meagre living by occasionally writing articles and

probably having to resort to prostitution at times. She had quickly gambled away the huge earnings from *The Story*. The year after the premiere of her film, she was arrested for absconding with the expensive designer gowns used in it. During her final years, she was in ill health, having been left with "nerves" after a bout of scarlet fever, which she treated, with the doctor's approval, with cigarettes and absinthe. Mary MacLane died from tuberculosis at the age of 48, poor and obscure, in a hotel room in a racially mixed Chicago neighbourhood. She seems to have chosen the area to be near her long-time friend Lucille Williams, an African American photographer, who was her companion at the time.[13]

FIGURE 10.1 Portrait of Mary MacLane, frontispiece from *My Friend Annabel Lee* (1903).

'ALL THAT TALK ABOUT THE DEVIL': CRITICISM, POPULAR CULTURE, AND PARODIES

MacLane's debut book was enough of a phenomenon to make the Butte Baseball team be renamed 'The Mary MacLanes' and to inspire the invention of a drink called the 'Mary MacLane High-Ball'—advertised as 'Cooling, Refreshing/Invigorating, Devilish'. The author herself licensed her name to such use and made good money from it. For example, she let a cigar manufacturer use a facsimile of her signature on its cigar boxes.[14] Other

authors also tried to earn money off her name, and at least two book-length parodies appeared, *Damn! The Story of Willie Complain* (1902) and *The Devil's Letters to Mary MacLane* (1903).[15] The latter, published anonymously by another female author, one T. D. McKown, lets Satan respond to the statements in MacLane's book. Through this ironic tactic, employed to moralist ends, her opinions are portrayed as genuinely diabolical and bad. Several times, Satan comments on MacLane's rejection of "proper" femininity, for example, pointing out that she has never 'felt the transport of an engagement ring on [her] finger'.[16] The satirist obviously wants to idealize a traditional and decorous womanhood, and basically has Satan explain that he inspires all other varieties.[17] The Satan presented here is no liberator or helper, but a single-mindedly evil tempter. He therefore urges his Mary: 'Bury the little germ of womanhood which might have lodged in the breast of even *you*.'[18] Chiming in with time-honoured Christian misogyny, McKown's Satan emphasizes women's special receptivity to his guiles and proclaims that '[w]oman is my trump of trumps' and says that '[w]hen I first planned the fall, I did it through the subtlety of woman'.[19] *The Devil's Letters* shows that MacLane's challenges to gender norms—more of which presently—were a major issue in the reception of her book (figure 10.2). It also attests to her commercial triumph, since publishers apparently felt they could cash in on it through products like this. Being widely satirized as an author is to some degree a sure sign of success.

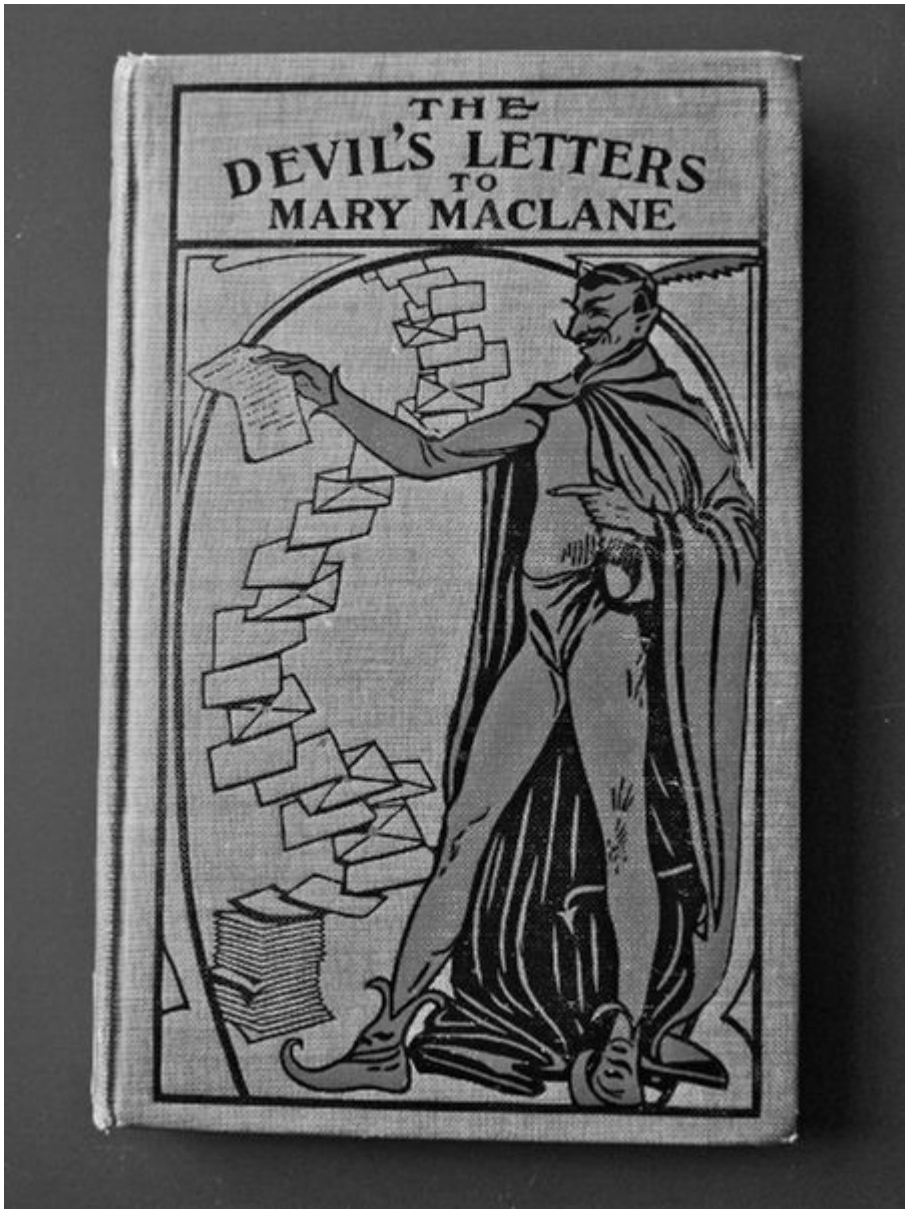

FIGURE 10.2 Cover of T. D. McKown's *The Devil's Letters to Mary MacLane* (1903). Author's collection.

While MacLane's impact as a name with a high market value is easy to ascertain, we know less about the reception of the book among MacLane's core readership, young women and adolescents. It is indeed lamentable that 'the voice of these people who would have most fervently identified with MacLane' is mostly lost to us, as Cathryn Halverson points out.[20] What we do know of how it was received among them, though, is highly interesting, as will be seen further on in the chapter. The reaction from this group is also, in

fact, considerably better documented than in the case of most other authors discussed in the present study, so comparatively we are not as badly off as might be supposed. Documentation of the mixed welcome the book received among professional critics, most of them male, is available in abundance, being easily accessed through contemporary newspaper articles and reviews, and we will now have a brief glimpse of this material (which will be analysed in more detail later).[21]

Opinions tended to be quite polarized. *The San Francisco Call* designated MacLane's work the 'worst trash that printer and publisher ever spent time and money on' and its author a 'silly maid' who had written down 'freak expressions of opinion'.[22] Others could instead praise the 'splendid sounds and harmonies in her thrilling, vibratory prose' (poet Harriet Monroe, quoted in *The Literary Digest*), claim that 'only two writers in the western hemisphere have produced faultless English—Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mary MacLane' (*Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, quoting the words of an unnamed critic), or applaud her 'crisp, clear, unhesitating use of English' (author and influential critic Hamlin Garland in his 1931 book *Companions on the Trail*).[23] Even critics who disliked the book often found certain parts of it impressive, for example, saying it contains 'evidence of a lot of deep thinking' (*The Republic*).[24]

In 1908, *The World* summed up the reception of MacLane's first book: 'Some proclaimed it the ravings of a maniac, others dubbed it what you might call intelligent and intentional immorality, while others still hailed her as a genius.'[25] Throughout these highly contrasting opinions, one thing that is immediately noticeable is that the newspapers played up the Satanic theme strongly, often with a comic angle. This could be both visual—with drawings of MacLane and Satan in tender embrace being quite common—or in the form of quoting juicy Satanic passages from the book, or asking the author questions about the Devil in interviews.[26] Headlines like 'Loves the Devil: So Says a Reckless Montana Girl Who Hankers Much for Notoriety' and 'Mary MacLane Here Without Her Devil' are typical.[27] MacLane herself actively contributed to the smell of brimstone surrounding her name in the press, by offering up lurid demonic sound bites in interviews. The *Hartford Herald* was regaled with the following: 'I love the devil. I want him to come for me. When he comes I shall be ready to go with him and oh! I shall be so happy!'[28]*The World* was treated to MacLane explaining that 'she would like

to be in closer touch with His Satanic Majesty, for through him alone she expects to find happiness'.[29]

MacLane's partisans at times felt compelled to offer apologetics for her use of this motif. Harriet Monroe, writing in the *Chicago American* (May 1902), stated: 'All that talk about the devil, for example. What imaginative young girl, even the saintliest, has not had her time of dreaming of a bold, bad conquering hero who should adore and torture her?'[30] Monroe here reduces Satan to something quite mundane—which, as will be seen, MacLane herself at times also did in interviews (perhaps when under some pressure), namely a mere symbol of a mortal man of a certain type. However, as will be demonstrated, such a reading is clearly contradicted by the text itself in several places, and Satan has many functions aside from that of an object of amorous excitement.

MacLane's name can be found in all sorts of publications during the period. Gideon Wurdz's satirical *The Foolish Dictionary* (1904) has the following entry for the Devil: 'An old rascal mentioned in the Bible, now reported engaged to Mary McLane [*sic*]', with an accompanying drawing of the happy couple.[31] Such parodies of the devilish Butte girl were fairly frequent. In the *Anaconda Standard*, another parody had MacLane proclaim herself a Satanic cultural hero: 'Oh, the curse of Prometheus descends upon me. … Woe to genius, the heaven scaler, the fire stealer!'[32] The same piece further ascribed a Satanic polytheism to her:

> If there is more than one devil, I love them all, all, all, to unspeakable madness and unutterable distraction. Come Satan, Lucifer, Ahriman, Belial, Samael, Zamiel, Beelzebub, Titan, Shedim, Moloch, Asmodeus, Mephistopheles, Abaddon, Apollyon, come one, come all, this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I, unless I fly straight into your arms of steel. I am not a polytheist; I am a polydiabolist. For fear of overlooking any industrious, deserving power of darkness, I will erect an altar 'to the unknown devil'.[33]

Another example, in *The World*, where her entire debut book is satirically encapsulated, runs as follows:

> I rise in the morning; eat three meals before breakfast; scrub the floor; write a little; yell for the devil, and go to bed. [This sentence is then repeated three times to make fun of the monotony described in MacLane's book.] … Oh, kind devil, help me to sell my book! … The devil fights shy of me, I have wooed him in vain … . The devil hasn't come yet, but I live in hopes. … Oh, devil, devil, devil, how devilishly diabolical you are, and with what a frenzy of impatience I await your coming! … Did you ever love an ammonia lady? I have. I could spend the rest of my life with her and the devil. … If I should leave out the dangs and the devil, what would be left?[34]

Let us now consider the actual text of *The Story of Mary MacLane*, which, in contradiction to the above summary, is in fact thematically elaborate and multi-dimensional, though indeed almost as repetitive as implied.

'WHO SAYS THE DEVIL IS NOT YOUR FRIEND?' *THE STORY OF MARY MACLANE*

The book, although nominally a diary, lacks any real narrative. It consists mostly of the author's thoughts on various subjects, without much interruption by external events, and commences with the following declaration: 'I of womankind and of nineteen years, will now begin to set down as full and frank a Portrayal as I am able of myself, Mary MacLane, for whom the world contains not a parallel. I am convinced of this, for I am odd.' Wherein consists this oddity, then? She immediately lists a number of traits she believes attests to it, emphasizing her uniqueness and the intensity of her feelings. As we shall see, lesbianism, which she does not mention at this time, should likely be counted among these "odd" characteristics. MacLane further announces she is 'broad-minded', 'a genius', and 'a philosopher of my own good peripatetic school'.[35] Her philosophical contemplation and introverted brooding results in an obsessive self-pity and anguish dominating the text, as succinctly expressed in the entry for 22 February, which consists of a single line: 'Life is a pitiful thing.'[36] This is not her only mood, however, and the book oscillates between being joyously life-affirming and deeply morbid and pessimistic. The exuberant celebrations of life are, as we shall see, intimately tied up with Satan in MacLane's world view, and she claims that 'the Devil has given me a philosophy of my own' and rhetorically asks: 'Who says the Devil is not your friend? Who says the Devil does not believe in the all-merciful law of Compensation?'[37] She moreover claims diabolical inspiration for her writing: '[T]here is a mental telegraphy between the Devil and me, which accounts for the fact that many of my ideas are so wonderfully groomed and perfumed and colored.'[38]

While MacLane is eager to hold herself up as completely unique and original, albeit with ideas directly influenced by telepathic communications from Satan, she admits to points of similarity with Lord Byron and the Ukrainian feminist artist and diarist Marie Bashkirtseff (1858–1884).[39] The latter, in her posthumously published diary, offered a sharp criticism of women's oppression in society, more specifically the art world in turn-of-

the-century Paris in which she moved.[40] MacLane shares her sentiments, though the place where she finds herself confined by similar structures is the considerably less glamorous and picturesque environment of Butte, Montana, where she is doing her best to endure a 'vapid and lonely life' with her family.[41] In the second diary entry, she laments the restrictions put upon women, saying that if she had been born a man she 'would have made a deep impression of [herself] on the world', and predicts a dreary future for herself.[42] She then exclaims: 'Oh, kind Devil, deliver me from it!'[43] Satan as a saviour, a symbol of liberation, becomes a main theme in the text from hereon. On the same page where she discusses how hard it is to be a woman, she explains that '[t]he Devil is really the only one to whom we may turn'.[44] As Cathryn Halverson perceptively puts it, MacLane's pleas to Lucifer for help seem 'at once in jest and in utter earnestness'.[45]

Satan is not simply a benevolent figure. He simultaneously symbolizes all that is dark and disturbing in MacLane's soul, aspects of her that she, however, is not at all ashamed of. For example, while reflecting on the dilapidated graveyard of Butte, she recalls a woman whose young child was buried there and then proceeds to callously ponder the worms in the ground: 'They have eaten the small body by now, and enjoyed it. Always worms enjoy a body to eat. And also the Devil rejoiced. And I rejoiced with the Devil.'[46] These gruesome thoughts mirror the grotesque descriptions of a rotting infant in Lewis's *The Monk*, and there is clearly a Gothic streak in MacLane's book, with an air of misanthropy and ghoulish delight at the horrible permeating the entire text.[47] For instance, there are passages of detailed discussion concerning various methods of suicide, and MacLane asserts: 'Death is fascinating—almost like the Devil. Death makes use of all his arts and wiles, powerful and alluring, and flirts with deadly temptation for me.' Satan, however, is at least a temporary bulwark against the death drive: 'But first the Devil must come. First the Devil, then Death.'[48] Satan, she says, will bring her happiness:

> I am ready and waiting to give all that I have to the Devil in exchange for Happiness. … I am fortunate that I am not one of those who are burdened with an innate sense of virtue and honor which must come always before Happiness … . But with me Virtue and Honor are nothing. I long unspeakably for Happiness. And so I await the Devil's coming.[49]

Satan's coming is a symbol of joy in the here-and-now, and she repudiates all ideas of being rewarded in an afterlife: 'Upon dying it might be that I should go to some wondrous fair country. … But I want the earthly Happiness. I am not high-minded and spiritual. I am earthly, human-sensitive, sensuous, sensual, and, ah, dear, my soul wants its earthly Happiness!'[50] The satisfaction Satan is going to bring her might, she says, seem of an objectionable kind to some, though MacLane, of course, cares little about their opinions:

> There are persons who say to me that I ought not to think of the Devil, that I ought not to think of Happiness—Happiness for me would be sure to mean something wicked (as if Happiness could ever be wicked!); that I ought to think of being good. I ought to think of God. These are persons who help fill the world with fools.[51]

MacLane considers Satan the creator of this world, a notion that entails that he encompasses both good and evil, as she explicates:

> You are superb, Devil! You have done a magnificent piece of work. I kneel at your feet and worship you. … The world is like a little marsh filled with mint and white hawthorn. It is filled with things likewise damnably beautiful. … [T]here is poetry; there is Charity; there is Truth. The Devil has made all of these things, and also he has made human beings who can feel. … In truth, the Devil has constructed a place of infinite torture—the fair green earth, the world. But he has made that other infinite thing—Happiness. I forgive him for making me wonder, since possibly he may bring me Happiness. I cast myself at his feet. I adore him. … I can think of no so-called vile deed that I would scruple about if I could be happy. Everything is justified if it gives me Happiness. The Devil has done me some great favor; he has made me without a conscience, and without Virtue. For which I thank thee, Devil.[52]

In the end, it seems Satan's creation is not a Hell on earth, so to speak. Rather, the unrest in her that he has created will, when she achieves Happiness with a capital *H*, become 'an instrument of joy'.[53]

To MacLane, Satan is (metaphorically) her god, and the one who has bestowed upon her everything in life that is to her liking: 'The Devil has given me some good things—for I find that the Devil owns and rules the earth and all that therein is. He has given me, among other things—my admirable young woman's body, which I enjoy thoroughly and of which I am passionately fond.'[54] She goes on: 'Devil, accept, for my two good legs, my sincerest gratitude.'[55] A connection between Satan, the body, and the sensuous pleasures of this world was an established motif, not only in Christian discourse but also among those who would celebrate these things

using the Devil as their symbol.[56] This also ties in with notions of Satan as a god of nature, an image popular in Romantic poetry but with roots in older Christian ideas about him as a ruler of the uncultivated wilderness (which grew from interpretations of, for example, Matt. 4:1 and Mark 1:13). Halverson points out how Butte's surrounding 'sand and barrenness', a space untamed by civilization and linked to Satan, seems to offer MacLane a respite from the oppressive domesticity of family life.[57] The Devil's uncivilized realm thus becomes a refuge from structures of oppression in society, especially the gender system that bars the freedom of women. Satan is a figure that, it is hoped, will shake things up and break the stagnancy of a stifling domesticity associated with Christian ideals.

'BEWILDERING DEMONIAC WINDS': UNHOLY LESBIAN DESIRES

MacLane contrasts her 'fine young body that is feminine in every fibre' with those of men: '[T]he masculine body is merely flesh, it seems, flesh and bones and nothing else.'[58]Satan, as we have seen, is identified as the creator of woman's admirable body (he has given it to MacLane, and she thanks him for it), but not, she seems to imply, of its inferior male counterpart.[59] In accordance with her contempt for male bodies, and her high regard for the Satanized female body, she has a strong desire—which definitely seems to cross the line from homosocial fondness into homosexual physical desire—for a woman who is some twelve or thirteen years her senior, and very different: her former high school teacher Fannie Corbin. This woman, whom MacLane refers to as 'the anemone lady', believes in God, while MacLane is 'ready and waiting to dedicate my life to the Devil in exchange for Happiness—or some lesser thing'.[60] Corbin has moved away from Butte, leaving MacLane behind to long for her. Although she at first asks '[a]re there many things in this cool-hearted world so utterly exquisite as the pure love of one woman for another woman?', it would seem her feelings are not quite so pure (that is, non-sexual) after all.[61] This impression builds up more and more over the course of the text. As she sits pondering her teacher, MacLane feels how '[s]trange, sweet passions stirred and waked deep within me'.[62] Somewhat further on, she explains: 'My love for her is a peculiar thing. It is not the ordinary woman-love. It is something that burns with a vivid fire of its own. … She is my first love—my only dear one. The

thought of her fills me … with rare, undefined emotions.'[63] They soon enough become more clearly defined, in a manner that must be said to be fairly unambiguous:

> I feel in the anemone lady a strange attraction of sex. There is in me a masculine element that, when I am thinking of her, arises and overshadows all the others. 'Why am I not a man', I say to the sand and barrenness with a certain strained, tense passion, 'that I might give this wonderful, dear, delicious woman an absolutely perfect love!' … So, then, it is not the woman-love, but the man-love, set in the mysterious sensibilities of my woman-nature. … Do you think a man is the only creature with whom one may fall in love?[64]

This statement leaves little room for doubt, even taking into account the different cultural climate of the time concerning such issues, which could simply be summed up as "denial". Still, there is scant indication in contemporary reviews and articles that anyone perceived passages like this as expressions of lesbianism (or were willing to talk about the issue).[65] Lillian Faderman, who attributes the popularity of intensely homoaffectional stories in the early 1900s partly to MacLane's 1902 book, has expressed severe scepticism of tendencies to use the differences between Victorian times and our own as a means to completely dismiss the idea of phrasings like those quoted having the meaning we would think today:

> Modern critics have been wont to explain such statements by attributing the description of what seems to be same-sex love to the rhetoric and sentimentality of the age, and thus denying the validity of the speaker's feeling. … [S]urely that author intended the reader to believe that the character feels a certain powerful emotion (which her age has permitted her to express and which another age might force her to deny).[66]

In an earlier analysis, Faderman argues that such 'devotion is in no way distinguishable from romantic love', but highlights that in spite of this there is no indication in MacLane's text that such a relationship is wrong, or that her feelings should be 'attributed to sin or sickness'.[67] The latter point is important, since if this had been the general view of such love, MacLane would have been sure to enthusiastically emphasize how wicked it was. The pathologization of lesbianism had simply not occurred yet in the United States, but when it did this was reflected in MacLane's writings—specifically in her final book, which we shall look at presently.[68]

While homosexuality was not mentioned explicitly in early newspaper coverage of MacLane, a phantom outline of it definitely appeared at times. In a 1902 interview, MacLane 'confesses to one strange and mad passion—her

love for a former girl schoolmate' (presumably Corbin, although she was a teacher rather than a schoolmate), saying she 'now thinks of her girl-sweetheart in secret'.[69] Even in a time less attuned to identifying close same-sex relationships as homosexual, the characterization of it here as 'strange and mad' decidedly points in that direction.

The issue became less ambiguous further on, for example, in a 1910 article by MacLane, 'Men Who Have Made Love to Me'.[70] Her final book, *I, Mary MacLane* (1917), includes an extended discussion of lesbianism (in a chapter named 'An Ancient Witch-light'), where she ambivalently portrays it both as a natural part of most women's psyche, and as a dark and Satanic thing. She here confirms that 'I am someway the Lesbian woman' and states that 'all women have a touch of the Lesbian'.[71] But 'full' lesbians are, she says, 'flawed fruits', and the 'deep-dyed Lesbian woman is a creature whose sensibilities are over-balanced … whose inner walls are streaked with garish heathen pigments: whose copious love-instincts are an odd mixture of mirth, malice and *luxure*'.[72] In what seems to be an attempt to tantalize or shock the reader, she reveals: 'I have lightly kissed and been kissed by Lesbian lips in a way which filled my throat with a sudden subtle pagan blood-flavored wistfulness, ruinous and contraband: breath of bewildering demoniac winds smothering mine.'[73] However, she insists, 'there is no vice in my Lesbian vein', but 'instead a pleasant degeneracy of attitude more debauching to my spirit than any mere trivial *traînant* vice would be'. It also holds 'a fascination in it', which 'tempers my humanness with an evil-feeling power'.[74] Ultimately, she decisively lays down, 'I don't know whether I am good and sweet in it or evil and untoward. And I don't care.' MacLane's handling of her own homosexual or bisexual inclination is similar to what we have seen in Renée Vivien in chapter 8. The moralistic discourse of demonization is seemingly internalized, and then utilized as a colourful poetic language in a manner that partly subverts it—since lesbianism is declared pleasurable and something the author will persist in regardless of the rest of the world viewing it as a thing of the Devil. Given MacLane's well-known earlier celebration of Satan, her talking of lesbianism using words like 'heathen', 'pagan', 'demoniac', 'malice', and 'an evil-feeling power' takes on a rather different meaning than if a stern Christian minister would have done so in a sermon. A term like 'demoniac' must be read, more or less, within the framework of MacLane's own previously established and

infamous discourse of Satanic inversion, where she to some extent turns the meaning of such words on their head.[75]

The same thing applies to her use of adjectives and phrasings signalling Decadence: 'flawed fruits', '*luxure*', 'ruinous and contraband', and the mention of 'sensibilities' that are 'over-balanced'. Through authors like Oscar Wilde, and his highly publicized 1895 trial for homosexual acts, Decadence as a literary and artistic movement had, to the public mind, become intimately bound up with homosexuality and was viewed with great suspicion. But since MacLane's writings in general display many Decadent traits along with an attitude of moral relativism (which is also expressed in the quote), it is difficult to read her words here as a condemnation. Rather, MacLane, who was, it would seem, bisexual with a stronger preference for women than men, appears to have concocted a rhetorical lesbian witches' brew of demonism and Decadence that she took some pleasure in imbibing.[76] The brew's much-desired side-effect, or perhaps its intended main purpose depending on how one sees it, was to *épater la bourgeoisie*.

What is particularly interesting about this brew is the religious flavour of the wordings used to frame lesbianism. Aside from the examples just given, we can also think of a letter to Corbin included in *The Story of Mary MacLane*, where the author's lesbian love is conceptualized in distinctly spiritual and cultic terms. She writes of their friendship that '[i]t contains infatuation, and worship, and bewitchment, and idolatry, and a tiny altar in my soul-chamber whereon is burning sweet incense in a little dish of blue and gold'.[77] This is an obvious parallel to the 'cult' of lesbianism that Renée Vivien couched in strongly religious language and connected to an explicit Satanism. All the same, it is highly unlikely that teenaged Mary MacLane in Butte, Montana, could have been aware of Vivien's writings, most of which were published after her book. The parallels are instead more likely to be the product of a somewhat similar cultural environment, which, in spite of the obvious vast differences between Butte and Parisian bohemian circles, contained analogous feminist ideas and a shared familiarity with certain parts of the literary canon: Sappho, Byron, Baudelaire, and so on.

'THAT DEFORMED MONSTROSITY—A VIRTUOUS WOMAN': DIABOLICAL CULTURAL CRITIQUE

Throughout *The Story*, MacLane sharply criticizes many aspects of society. One of her prime targets is marriage: 'This marriage rite, it appears, is often used as a cloak to cover a world of rather shameful things.'[78] The hypocrisy of the marital institution, she states, is perpetuated by generation after generation, and MacLane rejects this 'life of the good, virtuous Christians', saying 'that I should prefer some life that is not virtuous'. She shudders at 'the degradation of the woman who is tied down under a roof with a man who is really nothing to her' and scoffs at 'that deformed monstrosity—a virtuous woman', exclaiming '[a]nything, Devil, but that'.[79] Satan is called in to ratify this: 'I shall never make use of the marriage ceremony. I hereby register a vow, Devil, to that effect.'[80] As it would turn out, MacLane kept this promise to the Prince of Darkness her entire life. In relation to statements like those just quoted, her often-expressed desire to marry Satan might seem a little inconsistent. What, then, does it symbolize? I would suggest this metaphorical supernatural matrimony functions as an emblem of her rejection of earthly Christian wedlock. Her union with Lucifer is conceptualized as a hyper-sensuous celebration of the flesh: 'Always my young woman's-body is a great and important part of me, and when I am married to the Devil its finely-organized nerve-power and intricate sensibility will be culminated to marvellous completeness.'[81] This could be taken as a symbolic celebration of free sexuality in general, using Satan as an icon of sensual abandon.

In a fantasy scene, MacLane imagines she sits in conversation with Satan. She declares her love for him and asks him to make her his bride. He inquires if she thinks it would be a suitable marriage, and she answers: 'I hate a suitable marriage! No, it would not be suitable. It would be Bohemian, outlandish, adorable!'[82] This makes it easy to think of Victoria Woodhull's advocacy of 'Free Love', and how she was demonized as Mrs Satan for it, though it is difficult to know if MacLane could have been aware of this. She seems to propagate something akin to Woodhull's ideas on love relationships, as she explains to the Devil that 'nothing in the world matters unless love is with it, and if love is with it and it seems to the virtuous a barren and infamous thing, still—because of the love—it partakes of the very highest'.[83] Marriage is only one of several aspects of "proper" womanhood and cultural norms of femininity dismissed in the text. With disdain, MacLane writes about 'girl-books' and how she shares nothing with their intended readers, saying she has 'more tastes in common with the Jews wandering

through the wilderness, or with a band of fighting Amazons'.[84] The choice of Amazons as a parallel here can, of course, be understood as a feminist marker.

Aside from the Devil, MacLane also celebrates another figure typically viewed as a villain(ess), Emperor Claudius's wife Messalina (famous for her promiscuity and for conspiring against her husband, for which she was executed): 'She had the strength of will to take what she wanted, to do as she liked, to live as she chose to live.'[85] Her admiration for this "wicked" woman is yet another expression of a thoroughgoing rejection on MacLane's part of the rules women were supposed to adhere to. It extends even down to minor everyday matters like mending her skirts. She proudly states they do not get sewn when torn, since she refuses to be 'a sensible girl', proclaiming 'I hate a sensible girl'.[86] Sewing had considerable symbolic value at the time, as a quintessentially female task, and spurning it must be seen as a powerful statement with wide-ranging implications.

Enjoyment before duty and convention, especially as the latter pertain specifically to her sex, seems to be MacLane's motto. This is reflected in the celebrations of food and sweets, for example, fudge or porter steak with onions, which are recurrent in the book. Her epicurean ideals are lyrically expressed in a sensuous six-page reverie on the art of eating an olive. It ends with a passage that connects the olive with the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam and Eve, as well as Satan's rebellion: 'If this be damnation, damnation let it be! If this be the human fall, then how good it is to be fallen! At this moment I would fain my fall were like yours, Lucifer, "never to hope again". And so, bite by bite, the olive enters into my body and soul.'[87] The bombast of comparing olive eating to Eve's partaking of the forbidden fruit, and wishing to be like the fallen Lucifer in this context, is, of course, partly intended to be humorous. But MacLane also seems to try to make a serious point concerning how (in her view) life-negating Christian ideals have made even such simple pleasures taboo in a way, and how the moral traditionally associated with the Eden narrative permeates attitudes to enjoyment of life at large. The idea of enthusiasm for food as Satanic also has some interesting contemporary parallels. In a fascinating article, Joan Jacobs Brumberg has shown how American women's fasting and dieting to stay slim in the late nineteenth century demonstrated a general rejection of carnality and an adherence to Victorian ideals of non-physical femininity. The language in admonitions to practise such secular physical denial, she says, often 'reverberated with

references to religious ideas of temptation and sin'.[88] MacLane accordingly forcefully rejects the crypto-Christian denial of sensuality inherent in dieting and suspicious attitudes towards food, especially among self-denying women, using a Satanic counter-discourse to attack it.

MacLane relishes food as something this-worldly and intensely here-and-now. For her, food is a vigorously sensual pleasure, intertwined with a celebration of sexuality and the body—all of which are in turn tightly bound up with the benevolent Devil in her thinking. Egoistic enjoyment of food (instead of dutifully cooking for one's family) and eating as a sensual pleasure (as opposed to controlled and neurotic attitudes to food), sexuality (which a proper woman of the time ought to view as something men possess, and which women should merely dutifully endure in the marital bed) as well as a preoccupation with the body (which women were discouraged from thinking too closely about) mark MacLane out as transgressive. She is fully aware of this, and her choice of Satan as an ally—and according to her the creator of the physical world that contains such gustatory and tactile sensory elation—is a way of rebuffing established views of these pleasures as unsuitable for women. In her choice of porter steak as a symbol of embracing such gratification, MacLane can be seen as spurning a form of meat-abstaining asceticism particular to women, which had broad implications. Elaine Showalter has analysed how Victorian medical literature shows that '[i]n her attempt to become the incorporeal Victorian angel, unaffected by earthly appetite, the anorexic particularly renounced meat'. This, 'the traditional foodstuff of warriors and aggressors', was also seen at this time as 'the fuel of anger and lust', wherefore 'a carnivorous diet was associated with sexual precocity … even with nymphomania'. Certain anti-sexual feminists also frequently made this connection in books they published during late Victorian times, where feminism, chastity, and vegetarianism converge as connected values.[89] MacLane's celebration of meat-eating as a sensual pleasure should probably be related to such notions, and thus represents a rebellion against both the patriarchal 'Angel of the House' ideal and sex-negative feminism.

Unsurprisingly, for a book that has as a main theme a longing for union with Satan, an explicit rejection of Christianity per se is also present. MacLane describes God as indifferent towards mankind and views the Christian religion as 'full of hatred'. The 'too-brilliant Light' of Christianity is harshly reviled: 'Worship me, worship me, it says, but after that let me

alone. There is a bookful of promises. Take it and thank me and worship me. It does not care. If I obey it, it looks on indifferently. If I disobey it, it looks on indifferently. If I am in woe, it looks on indifferently.'[90] MacLane's Satan at times seems an attending, kind figure, the very opposite of the absent Christian God. He can exclaim 'Poor little Mary MacLane!', has 'tender, divine steel-gray eyes', a gaze she says 'ravished me with inconceivable gentleness' and is 'softly-compassionate'.[91] He understands her because, she declares to him, '[t]he wisdom of the spheres is in your brain'.[92]

'COMPLETELY, MADLY IN LOVE WITH THE DEVIL': THE DEMON LOVER MOTIF

The wise, caring figure of Satan is set, as we have seen, in a romantic frame: 'Periodically I fall completely, madly in love with the Devil. He is so fascinating, so strong—so strong, exactly the sort of man whom my wooden heart awaits. I would like to throw myself at his head.'[93] Cathryn Halverson seems surprised that 'although MacLane is certainly struggling against a patriarchal society, and although the devil is portrayed as masculinity incarnate, MacLane does not present the devil as her enemy, but on the contrary, as her saviour'. In an interpretation she admits she is not quite satisfied with, Halverson suggests Satan 'not only represents some temporary and terrifying fulfilment of desires that MacLane can't even articulate, but also represents transcendence of the self'. Satan's violent embrace, in such a reading, would symbolize a longing to escape wearisome circular self-analysis, as well as physical sensation, in order to encounter a reality beyond consciousness, 'akin to Kant's numina'.[94] This appears unconvincing, since MacLane is very much a here-and-now thinker, who displays little metaphysical longing. Her desire for the 'anemone lady' may be a form of yearning for the ideal, but her fantasies about Satan clearly indicate that her enthusiasm is primarily for physical, sensual, carnal—though not necessarily exclusively sexual—experience.[95] Lucifer functioning as a symbol of physical experience on a more general level is something I would contend also fits in with a long literary tradition that MacLane is likely to have drawn on: that of the demon lover.

This figure, a demon or other supernatural creature with a sexual interest in humans, has a long history in Western culture (see chapter 2). Discussions of demon lovers appear in works by Augustine and several other major

Christian thinkers, as well as in folk legends. English literature is filled with such creatures, and we encounter them in Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Milton.[96] The demon lover achieved its pinnacle of literary attention in the era of Romanticism, with Coleridge, Keats, Byron, and many others enthusiastically using the motif.[97] In such texts, the demon lover remained a predominantly sinister figure, but at times also became an ambiguous symbol of freedom or inspiration. A well-read woman like MacLane would surely have been familiar with some of this material. Slightly later on, non-supernatural versions, modelled on the literally Satanic figures in older works, became common. The most famous such example is probably Heathcliff in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Gothic literature also has many examples of the motif, as seen in chapter 5. For example, Dracula in Stoker's eponymous 1897 novel is a demon lover figure and brings out sexual lust and "improper" behaviour in one of the novel's female protagonists. But where the conservative Stoker portrays this as a terrible event, MacLane relishes the embrace of the demon lover and the carnality he epitomizes. In Stoker, the demonic Dracula and the changes he incurs in women are obviously intended to function as a demonization of those who transgress Victorian social mores, but it has also been suggested in feminist scholarship that the male demon lover has always been a 'manifestation and instrument of men's oppression of women through rape and murder'.[98] Even if this is a sweeping generalization that is awkward in numerous ways, it may hold a degree of truth in some cases. Through claiming agency in her dealings with Satan, MacLane effectively subverts this aspect of the motif. Similarly, she overthrows the dimension of social control the motif is used to bolster in Stoker and other authors. If many Gothic novels are, as has been argued, tools to teach women 'how to become properly feminized', then *The Story* to some extent functions as a means to shatter such socialization.[99]

MacLane instead connects with a different aspect of the literary motif in question, which posits the paranormal paramour as a bringer of positive change, either disrupting an unpleasant current situation or bringing a new and unexpected form of pleasure (which is often, however, portrayed as problematic or impossible to sustain). Examples of this, familiar from chapter 5, include Gautier's 'La Morte amoureuse' and Maturin's *Melmoth*. An 1805 series of demon lover poems written by Charlotte Dacre, best known as the author of *Zofloya*, can also be counted to this category. Adriana Craciun reads one of these poems as 'a coded version of female sexual

pleasure and agency', since the female 'herself conjures the object of her affection, the demon lover', hereby 'reversing the familiar trajectory of male desire which limits the woman'.[100] In MacLane, this is not coded, but explicit, as is the positive change she insists the encounter will bring. Her demon lover, she stresses in a key passage, will transform her:

> The Devil and I will love each other intensely, perfectly—for days! He will be incarnate, but he will not be a man. He will be the man-devil, and his soul will take mine to itself and they will be one—for days! The love of the man-devil will enter into my barren, barren life and melt away all the cold, hard things, and water the barrenness.[101]

After her union with Satan, the old Mary MacLane will be no more: 'There will be instead a brilliant, buoyant, joyous creature—transformed, adorned, garlanded by the love of the Devil.'[102]

Perhaps the single most influential line written of a demonic paramour is Coleridge's phrasing about 'woman wailing for her demon lover' in *Kubla Khan* (1816), which Byron chose as the motto of his play *Heaven and Earth* (1821).[103] Given MacLane's professed love of Byron this line may very well have been an important impulse, since wail for her demon lover is indeed what she does throughout her book. *Heaven and Earth* itself may also have influenced her. In the play, which takes place shortly before and during the great Deluge where God drowns most of humanity, two daughters of the tribe of Cain are engaged in a forbidden relationship with two of God's angels (soon to be rebel angels), Samiasa and Azaziel.[104] Similarly to MacLane, the women call to their superhuman lovers to appear, using a form of invocation (in other words: the females are active agents in the relationship), and they scorn marriage to mortal men as leading only to 'toil and spin'.[105] Byron lets one of the women describe Satan as '[t]he first who taught us knowledge' and has other mortals express very sharp criticism of the cruel God who finds it good to drown almost all of humanity.[106] As can be seen, the text is saturated with provocative Satanic sentiments. Although the archangel Raphael says to Azaziel 'Rebel! thy words are wicked, as thy deeds', he himself, and his master, more clearly appear as the representatives of evil in the narrative.[107] There is a surprisingly happy ending for the daughters of Cain, as their (now rebel) angel lovers carry them away from the destruction wrecked by God, bringing them '[t]o some untroubled star'.[108] The basic idea of demon lovers carrying their mates away from negative circumstances

—imminent perdition in Byron's play, small-town life and patriarchal oppression in MacLane's case—is very much present in *The Story of Mary MacLane*, and Byron seems a likely source for it.

In contrast to the entirely kindly rebel angels in *Heaven and Earth*, MacLane's Satan is portrayed as a brutal lover, which is precisely what she longs for. To the question 'What would you have me do, little MacLane?' from Satan, she would, she says, answer: 'Hurt me, burn me, consume me with hot love, shake me violently, embrace me hard, *hard* in your strong, steel arms, kiss me with wonderful burning kisses—press your lips to mine with passion, and your soul and mine would meet then in an anguish of joy for me!'[109] She would also ask him to 'treat me cruelly, brutally'.[110] Halverson characterizes this exchange as light in tone, 'a parodic representation of sadomasochism'.[111] It is something more, too, I would suggest: a refusal to be ladylike and pretend that a savage sexuality is completely foreign to women. As such, it is part of MacLane's project of tearing down rules governing female behaviour and longings.

'HE IS INCARNATE AT TIMES': REINTERPRETING SATAN AS A MORTAL MAN

In one passage, MacLane politely states: 'I try to always give the Devil his due—and particularly in this Portrayal.' What is her Satan like, then?

> I never think of the Devil as that atrocious creature in red tights, with cloven hoofs and a tail and a two-tined fork. I think of him rather as an extremely fascinating, strong, steel-willed person in conventional clothes—a man with whom to fall completely, madly in love. I rather think, I believe, that he is incarnate at times.[112]

This ambiguous passage seems to have become the basis of an explanation, presented in articles written the months after the book was published, which could supposedly reduce all her use of Satan to a mere allegory for a very mundane relationship with a mortal man. It is easy to see why this was appealing for some. Such a reading, effectively removing all "Satanism", would dispel many of the troublesome issues raised by her metaphorical use of Lucifer for purposes of cultural critique. Further, the text would be more palatable for mainstream tastes if it could be read as an allegory of a completely ordinary longing for Prince Charming, albeit a roguish one. MacLane herself played a part in this process, perhaps for opportunistic reasons: she may have believed the commercial appeal of her text might be

improved even more if some of the sharpest edges of it were gently trimmed down. It could also be that she felt pressured by interviewers to come up with a more "sane" explanation for her employment of the Devil figure, or she may have become fed up with the media's fixation with it. Whatever her reason, in a 13 July 1902, interview with the *St. Paul Globe*, MacLane expanded upon her view of Satan:

> Q.Will you please tell just what you meant by the devil, to whom you appeal so strongly in your book?
>
> A.Oh, it is a fanciful idea.
>
> Q.Have you ever seen any man who resembled your Devil?
>
> A.No; never. There are only a few real devils, although many counterfits. My Devil was not intended to resemble the evil one; neither was it meant to resemble any special man. It is now over a year since I wrote my book, and, of course, one's ideas change. The book was a passionate outbreak.[113]

As we can see, MacLane here implicitly says Satan is a symbol of a mortal man (if not 'any special man'). In articles following this one, the *St. Paul Globe* consistently interpreted MacLane's Satan as a metaphor for a human male, suggesting that 'the devil she wanted to meet was a mortal Lucifer'.[114] On 22 July, MacLane was interviewed by *The World* and received a question about her intentions with giving Satan such a prominent place in her book. She explained: 'Simply because that word was less hackneyed than "prince" or "ideal". All girls of nineteen are waiting for somebody that many of them call the "prince", many others the "ideal". I called him by "devil with steel-gray eyes". But that has passed. That was all part of being nineteen.'[115] The apologetic tone here suggests MacLane is trying to give an answer to appease the reporter, who is clearly sceptical of the Satanic content in her work. Regarding the interpretation of MacLane's Satan as a straightforward Prince Charming figure—in spite of her text itself often contradicting it (Prince Charming would hardly, for example, be the creator of all women's bodies)—Carolyn Mattern points out that there is ample evidence to refute 'such a facile interpretation, although it must be noted that Mary herself was somewhat inconsistent on the point'. This is certainly true, as her use of Satan is multi-faceted, with an ambiguity that is likely to have been

intentional. It is hence nigh-impossible to pin down the MacLaneian version of the figure in question. At times, her love affair with the Devil seems, Mattern says, 'to represent not only a desire for love but also a desire for a more generalized fulfilling, worldly experience'.[116] She is decidedly onto something here, but does not develop it in more detail. Her reading is borne out explicitly by another MacLane interview, where the young author says: 'I don't want the Devil particularly, but I do want experience. So does every one. Every one keeps quite still about it and goes softly along to meet the Devil, quite silently. I said I was going to meet him, and the rest didn't know I spoke for them too. But I knew.'[117]

It is clear, both from this statement and from the book itself, that Satan is not simply used as an allegory for some wicked human male the author hopes will come to sweep her off her feet (though this could indeed be one aspect of the allegory). Nor is the figure exclusively a symbol of worldly experience. He is both, and more. In an article she wrote in 1910, MacLane herself spoke of the Devil as a conquering mortal seducer, but elsewhere in the same text also used her old catch-phrase 'kind Devil, deliver me from …' (cockroaches, in this case), which implies a litany not directed to a man but to a (symbolic) deity.[118] In August of the same year that her first book came out, MacLane set down that '[t]he expression "devil" may have been used symbolically. I don't say it was'.[119] In spite of the author's reticence to fix the meaning of the figure in her text, it seems obvious that the Devil is indeed symbolic and signifies several notions and qualities at once in her elusive multi-faceted use of him. Many of the things Satan represents in the text are best understood when read as part of an established Satanic discourse, to which we shall now turn.

'I, TOO, WAS A THEOSOPHIST': SITUATING MACLANE IN A PRE-EXISTING SATANIC DISCOURSE

No one has yet made a convincing attempt to relate *The Story of MacLane* to the pre-existing tradition of literary Satanism, or to contemporary esoteric and political use of Lucifer. Diverging from the meticulous and impressive contextualization that otherwise characterizes her dissertation, Kathryne Tovo makes a rather half-hearted try by suggesting Satan as 'a wise trickster figure with strong connections to life's sensuous and sexual pleasures' can also be found in George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1903), Mark

Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*, Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*, and Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* ('Beyond Good and Evil', 1886), and that they are therefore likely influences on MacLane. This is only mentioned in passing, without any detailed comparison.[120] What Tovo omits to mention, or is unaware of, is that Twain's text, which he worked on until his death in 1910, was not published until 1916 (posthumously), and Bierce's was not issued in book form until 1906, prior to which parts of it were published as columns in the *News Letter*, a small San Francisco financial weekly, and then in some other fairly obscure local journals.[121] Since Shaw's book was published the year after MacLane's, Bierce's four years later (with its weekly instalments having reached few outside of San Francisco), and Twain's a further ten years later, none of them could have helped shape *The Story*. Nietzsche's book does not appear a likely direct influence either, since it had not been translated into English at the time, nor into French (which MacLane read), and the German philosopher was little known in the United States in 1902. He is all the same, unlike the other authors proposed by Tovo, a possible indirect influence, since his ideas affected many other writers that MacLane may have come across.

Tovo also suggests a potential parallel to Theosophy, which is indeed plausible, but she seems to have very little knowledge of its teachings and has obviously not studied a single Theosophical text.[122] This is somewhat surprising given the careful situating of MacLane in contemporary discourses that is the hallmark of the rest of her study. While MacLane never mentioned reading Blavatsky, in *The Story* she tells of occasionally visiting 'a literary club where they talk theosophy', which would at this time in the United States presumably be Blavatsky's variant of it and not theosophy in general.[123] In a 1902 interview, she told of having a close friend who was 'an ardent Theosophist' and stated, 'I very quickly saw after talking with her that I, too, was a Theosophist.'[124] All the same, she does not appear to have been a formal member of the Theosophically influenced Butte literary society or of the Theosophical Society proper. Regardless, she may conceivably have been familiar with the positive interpretation of Satan as a liberator presented in *The Secret Doctrine*. However, other than a very general view of the Devil as helpful and connected with free thought, her take on the figure shares few traits with Blavatsky's Lucifer.

In this context, it is interesting to note that MacLane makes it clear that her mindset is entirely atheist and materialist: 'My genius is not in the least like second sight. That savors of the supernatural, the mysterious. My genius is a sound, sure, earthly sense, with no suggestion of mystery or occultism.'[125] It is thus likely that her Satan should be perceived as an entirely symbolic personage, with no "real" existence of any kind. We can, of course, note that a distinctly esoteric but non-theistic thinker like Blavatsky also conceived of Satan as wholly symbolic, though with a strange tendency, shared by MacLane, to depict him as an active, conscious entity. MacLane in fact does not explicitly declare Satan non-existent in an absolute sense, instead describing him as 'a possibility', but without any elaboration on the exact meaning of this.[126]

According to Tovo, few contemporary readers seem to have picked up on MacLane's sense of humour when dealing with Satanic themes. In her discussion of the (impossible, as I have shown) potential influence from Twain, she notes that using humour as a tool for social criticism was a time-honoured tactic among American dissidents.[127] Another such dissident, who was however not known primarily for his sense of humour, was Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Aside from Bashkirtseff, several contemporary reviewers mentioned him as a possible inspiration to MacLane.[128] The perceived parallel seems to have been to his *Song of Myself* (1855). However, Whitman is also a conceivable influence on another account: MacLane's use of Satan. In 'Chanting the Square Deific' (1865–66), Whitman writes of a Satan who is 'Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt … / Lifted, now and always, against whoever, scorning, assumes to rule me' and who announces 'Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words'.[129] This bold mutineer embodies values very much held by the aloof, rebellious MacLane herself, who is constantly asking for Satan's help to attain the sovereign condition the Devil personifies in Whitman's poem. In a late nineteenth-century American context, the Kansas-based newspaper *Lucifer* (1883–1907, headquartered in Chicago from 1896 and with subscribers and distributors across the country—perhaps even in Butte, Montana) is also something that MacLane could very well have come across (on *Lucifer*, see chapter 3). She definitely shared this periodical's feminist and radical individualist sentiments. More specifically, she was in agreement with its view of the institution of marriage as oppressive. The fact that these ideas

were gathered under a banner that was Satanic in a sense, as was the case in *The Story*, makes it quite feasible that she flipped through an issue or two of *Lucifer*.

It is also possible to analyse MacLane as related to a specifically feminine literary current of her time. Halverson views MacLane's use of allegorical tropes—as we have seen, primarily the Devil—as placing her in the tradition of the New Woman writers of the 1890s, such as George Egerton. As the reader will recall from chapter 6, Egerton used the witch as a symbol of sexual freedom and emancipation. Like many of her New Woman peers, Egerton experimented with new fictional forms, and MacLane's genre-defying book also parallels this.[130] It is neither diary, novel, prose poem, philosophical tract, political polemic, nor causerie, but something encompassing these and more. While the Devil may not have been a prominently used figure in New Woman writing, Egerton's witch allegory in 'A Cross Line' (1893) was one of the most famous texts in the genre, and it has an indirect but strong connection to Satan through the cultural history of the witch. On the basis hereof, in combination with MacLane's similarly experimental prose and focus on freedom for women, it seems entirely justified to view *The Story* as affined to this genre.[131]

Further, it is viable to link MacLane to the use of Devil-worshipping witches as freedom-fighters in the texts of Michelet, or as feminists in American suffragette Matilda Joslyn Gage's work, although there is no indication of her actually having read these authors. The connection explored in chapter 2 and 6, between feminism and Satanism in various demonizing caricatures (e.g. of Victoria Woodhull), also seems relevant. These works form part of a wider cultural context and are not, I wish to stress, something I claim directly influenced MacLane (though it is by no means impossible she could have read, for example, Gage). However, the Satanic connotations of feminism that were floating around in contemporary discourse at the very least make up a diffuse background to *The Story*. We might actually view the works by Shaw and Twain, at the time unpublished, as also being relevant in a way, since they indicate certain ideas concerning the Devil were being worked over in the minds of radical writers at roughly the same time as MacLane was writing her book. This suggests that they were probably partly drawing on a shared pool of ideas and had an overlapping familiarity with certain texts.[132]

A rather obvious source of inspiration for *The Story* remains to be mentioned. Strangely, since she writes admiringly of him several times, no one has discussed MacLane's Devil in relation to Byron's well-known Satanist works, with primarily *Cain* (1821) being clearly pertinent. I have already touched upon the possible influence from the famous Romantic's *Heaven and Earth*, but *Cain* is more important if we are to understand Satan's function as an emblem of cultural critique. In Byron's play, Satan emerges as a voice of opposition, questioning taken for granted truths and the authority of God. Whether he is actually benevolent or not is an open question, but he is clearly a radical freethinker in the vein of MacLane herself and the Devil she constructed to be the embodiment of her ideas. The dialogue between her and Satan at the end of her book resembles those between him and Cain in Byron's play.[133] But there are also differences, a major one being that MacLane does not really give the Devil a voice, rather letting him act as a foil to her own speculations and ruminations. She ascribes various attributes to him and makes him a symbol of liberation, but the brief lines he is allowed to utter are nowhere near the grand Miltonic speeches he would typically sprout in Romantic texts. Turn-of-the-century socialist use of Satan often followed in the footsteps of Shelley and Byron in this respect, or used the figure in a much more abstract and impersonal manner. MacLane retains the intimate conversations with the Devil from *Cain*, but gives herself the best lines and lets Satan ask questions and react to her drastic ideas instead of the other way around. Here we can perhaps see a parallel to Satan's 'Socratic' role as portrayed in *The Woman's Bible*.

MacLane's insistence on being a self-sufficient genius is similar to the sentiments in the final speech of Lucifer in *Cain*. This stressing of autonomy and radical freedom, which is to be found in many texts from the period, has been identified by scholars as the central trait of Romantic Satanism itself (see chapter 3). Part of this cluster of ideas is the entitlement to define good and evil on one's own terms (as in the celebrated line by Milton's Satan, 'Evil, be Thou My Good') and an apotheosis of the poetic genius, which is part of a broader development at the time where divinity was transferred from God in heaven to man himself.[134] In the United States, Whitman can partly be seen as an exponent of these thoughts, with his *Song of Myself* as well as the treatment in 'Chanting the Square Deific' of Satan as an unbending rebel (who refuses to let his values be affected by outside influences). The ideals expressed by MacLane belong to the same intellectual

current of Romantic Satanism that the American poet was drawing on, as her open admiration of Byron makes evident. MacLane's contemporaries probably also frequently read her through the lens of Romantic Satanism, as proven by comparisons to Byron and Shelley made by journalists.[135]

As the many parallels discussed here indicate, Lucifer the liberator remained a vital theme in American and European culture in MacLane's time, and played a major role in literary classics still being widely read. Halverson correctly characterizes Satan in *The Story* as 'an overloaded trope that works in multiple ways (as he always does)'.[136] We can add that one reason for this overloading—when looking at potential direct and indirect influences, as well as considering reader-response—is the many associations to a plethora of often incongruent contemporary discourses on Satan as somehow appealing that the text was embedded in. These range from Romantic portrayals of the figure as a cultural hero and social liberator to Decadent fascination with the Devil as evil and corrupting.

'A LOVER OF EVERYTHING THAT IS EVIL': SATANIC GENIUS, WICKEDNESS, AND PUBLICITY

The perhaps most prominent feature of MacLane's personality, as presented in writings and interviews, is her narcissism. 'Yes', she writes, 'you may gaze long and curiously at the portrait in the front of this book. It is of one who is a genius of egotism and analysis, a genius who is awaiting the Devil's coming.'[137] Later, she proudly proclaims: 'I am the most human creature that ever was placed on the earth. The geniuses are always more human than the herd.'[138] She is also, she says, the foremost among Satan's people: 'Out of countless millions of the Devil's anointed I am one to acknowledge myself.'[139] Her supposed genius, consistently associated with the Devil, is used in a rather specific legitimating manner: as support for her right to be wicked, unconventional, and free.

It is with considerably pride MacLane holds herself up as an example of an amoral being. She chirpily describes her habit of stealing things and considers it a triumph that she no longer feels any guilt about this at all.[140] In an imagined conversation with Satan, he tells her: 'You are a most interesting feminine philosopher—and your heart is after my own heart, in its lack of *virtue*.'[141] Seemingly, MacLane rejoices in wickedness and states: 'There is

nothing in the world without its element of Badness. It is in literature; it is in every art—in pictures, sculpture, even in music. There are certain fine, deep, minute passages in Beethoven and in Chopin that tell of things wonderfully, sublimely bad.'[142] The sublimity of evil is, of course, an old Romantic, Gothic, and Decadent trope, and to make this connection even clearer, she refers to Byron in her discussion of it: 'The Devil's bad things—like the Devil's good things—may gleam and glisten, oh, how they may gleam and glisten! I have seen them do so, not only in a poem of Byron's, but in the life that is.'[143] She longs, she says, 'to cultivate my element of Badness'.[144] Why? Because 'Badness compared to Nothingness is beautiful'.[145] Her 'element of Badness' is associated in a straightforward manner with her claims to being a genius: 'There is in me much more of evil than of good. Genius like mine must needs have with it manifold bad.'[146]

The genius, the 'evil genius' as it were, is allowed to do what the mass-woman may not, and the ideas frequently espoused by MacLane that partly seem familiar from feminist tracts are all filtered through a radical individualism. Her wish is not that all women be set free from oppressive structures, only that freedom be granted those whose genius should allow them to transcend these structures. As she later explained in *I, Mary MacLane*: 'I sing only the Ego and the individual.'[147] Although many of the obstacles to her freedom are specific to women, she presents no suggestions regarding how to systematically remove them so that all of her sex may tread the path of liberty unhindered. She does, however, occasionally express sympathy and solidarity with others who have transgressed against the code of correct womanly behaviour. These include a peddler-woman, whom she admires for having left her husband, and an old Irish woman, scorned even by her neighbours in the Butte slum, who has had many husbands and lovers.[148] Such females were involuntary outcasts. MacLane cynically used professions of "wickedness" as tools to gain publicity and commercial success.

An article in the *Jennings Daily Record*, featuring an illustration of Satan looking approvingly (or possibly amusedly) at MacLane, is headed 'Montana Girl Puzzles Students of Humanity'. The young author is characterized as having 'vice in all of its horrifying attendants as an ideal' and 'hungering for fame as a man-eating tiger does human blood'.[149] It is also noted that it seems inexplicable why she 'attributes to herself so many vices', since she in fact

'lives a quiet, uneventful life'. MacLane is quoted as saying: 'I am going to the devil as fast as I can. … After I am dead I shall be herded along with the goats.' Supposedly, she claims to have 'graduated from every school of evil that has been recorded on the calendar of crime' and being 'a lover of everything that is evil'.[150]

To another interviewer, she stated, 'I like wicked people. I think that wicked people are much more interesting than good people.'[151] In one early interview, she glanced down at a purse lying in a visitor's lap and said: 'If you were not looking I would steal that pocketbook, for I have no morals. I am absolutely without principle, and I care nothing for reputation. I have no virtue.'[152] However, the reporter brushes this aside as a pose: 'These remarks may have sounded startling but for the fact that she repeats them to everyone she comes in contact with', further ascertaining 'they were delivered in such a set, stereotyped fashion that one could almost believe they were of her stock in trade.'[153]

MacLane reinvented herself as a transgressive, aloof, and extravagant figure, allied with Satan, and at least temporarily this proved a very effective strategy. Her outrageous behaviour when interacting with journalists must be considered an important part of her success, a sort of performative extension of her book, which would further strongly have influenced how it was read. Just like the text itself, her public persona was not spontaneous or "natural", but highly calculated. An extremely cynical letter written to her publisher while working on her second book attests to this: 'I am catering to the public as hard as ever I can—still think it would be bad policy to let the public know it. … It is infinitely preferable to let the public think I am supremely indifferent. It will then knuckle down all the more.'[154] As seen in the just quoted article, not all were so credulous. There are several other examples of scepticism towards her wickedness and indifference. 'To be eccentric', *The Jennings Daily Record* states, 'seems to be the aim of her life', adding that some simply see her peculiarities as a means to gain publicity.[155] The latter interpretation appears to have been the more common one. *The New York Times* perceived the book as 'easily explainable in a maidenly desire for notoriety', and others also held her up as a somewhat immature provocateur.[156]

MacLane's use of Lucifer is logical in light of how she describes herself in *The Story*: 'I am charmingly original. I am delightfully refreshing. I am

startlingly bohemian. I am quaintly interesting. … I can talk to a roomful of dull people and compel their interest, admiration, and astonishment.'[157] Praising Satan seems a useful tool for arousing interest and astonishment, and surely he was instrumental in achieving the notoriety that made MacLane instantly famous. Bluntly put, 'Satan sells'. But this is only one side of the matter. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, she also employs the figure in a less cynical manner—harnessing the fear that Satan arouses in conservative hearts and his startling effect even on less pious souls—in order to fiercely attack convention and moralism, especially the aspects of them that oppress women. She does it with her forked serpent tongue planted firmly in cheek, but there is no indication that she was not in earnest as a propagator of epicurean enjoyment of worldly pleasures, free love, and individual liberty. The latter was something, she makes clear, that women were particularly short on, and Satan is invoked as an ally to help remedy this lack. The celebration of wickedness, the longing to 'be herded along with the goats', is a celebration of freedom, of things condemned as inappropriate by old-fashioned moralists, who were subsequently, as expected, duly upset by her book. Especially offensive to many was the fact that these horrible things had been written by a woman. *Goodwin's Weekly* angrily exclaimed that she seemed 'to have written her so-called philosophy to get an outlet for base passions, which some people might imagine, but which *no woman* would say'.[158] We shall now look at some of the gendered objections that were raised to her sinfulness, posed or not.

FIGURE 10.3 Caricature of MacLane from the *Anaconda Standard*, 4 May 1902. Satan and MacLane together in a rocking chair, enjoying their happy marriage.

FIGURE 10.4 Caricature of MacLane from the *Anaconda Standard*, 4 May 1902. MacLane declaring her love to a whole legion of devils.

'DECIDEDLY COLD': INSANITY, HYSTERIA, AND UNWOMANLY EVIL

In several newspaper articles, the authors dwell on the lack of warmth in MacLane's facial features. This, of course, was a cardinal sin in a woman, who was supposed to be a warm and loving caregiver according to the ideals of the time. One journalist mentions the 'peculiar, cold expression in her eyes', another the 'decidedly cold' expression of her face, and so on.[159] The

press came up with headlines like 'Mary MacLane Says She Hates Men', which fit well with this cold persona and her rejection in *The Story* of traditional female signifiers like sewing skills and romantic girl books.[160] When interviewed, MacLane took every opportunity to reiterate her contempt for contemporary ideals of womanhood, for example, saying, 'I detest perfect ladies and sweet girls.' She defined a perfect lady thus:

> Oh, she has clean hands always, and smooth. She wears white kid gloves and silken skirts. She sits in a straight-back chair and sews. … From all such may the kind devil deliver me! … No girl ever wanted to be sensible. Therefore if she acts as though she liked being sensible she is a hypocrite.[161]

Impudent opinions of this sort, of course, angered many conservative critics, who occasionally went so far as to suggest she should be physically disciplined. Although they made such statements half in jest, the underlying aggression is certainly no joke. The punishments male reviewers felt should be meted out were clearly related to her being a woman and combined a patronizing attitude with an ill-hidden tendency to sadistic violence. A Catholic reviewer called the book 'unwholesome, immodest, devilish' and suggested a remedy for its author's ailments: 'An irate parent with a good, strong slipper could work wonders with the young thing's longing by plying it frequently and lustily on her bustle rest.' One of the things he took issue with was her celebration of her own body in a manner he found to be highly unsuitable.[162] The *New York Times* similarly proposed she should be spanked, through the mechanical means of an 'automatic slipper'.[163]

There were other ways of dealing with the unease caused by her book. Since no woman in her right mind could write such horrible things, MacLane must clearly be insane, many journalists seemed to reason. For example, *The Jennings Daily Record* mentions that '[s]ome declare that she is insane', and *The Republic* designates her book 'a pathological curiosity'.[164] The examples could easily be multiplied. A particularly unpleasant one is to be found in *The New York Herald*, which stated, 'She should be put under medical treatment and pens and paper kept out of her way until she is restored to reason.'[165]

Contemporaries called MacLane not only insane, but more specifically hysterical.[166] As seen in my earlier discussions of nineteenth-century scholarly ideas concerning historical witchcraft, and Huysmans's hysterical 1890s Satanist woman Mme Chantelouve, putting forward this argument

concerning MacLane makes particular sense given that she was a praiser of the Devil. Hysteria and (feminine) Satanism went hand in hand in turn-of-the-century discourse. It is also worth noting that the typical Gothic heroine—including Lucy in *Dracula*—has been described as hysterical, and MacLane's use of the demon lover motif, so common in that genre, therefore makes it logical to label her thus.[167] The widespread view of hysteria at the time (outside of the Charcot school) was that it was the result of unsatisfied sexual and maternal drives. Some doctors even suggested that sexual relations (with a husband, of course) were the best treatment.[168] The slander of MacLane as hysterical is thus probably related to her being a virgin in combination with the inappropriate form of enthusiasm for sexuality in her book. A common opinion was that hysteria could lead to nymphomania unless the sexual urges were given their only suitable and appropriate outlet, that is, in the marital bed. Since MacLane refused this option explicitly and categorically, she seemed a dangerously uncontainable hysteric. Reviewers thus felt a need to recommend various forms of chastisement and restraining of her.

'I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT IT WAS ALL IN A BOOK': MACLANE SOCIETIES, SUICIDE, AND CRIME

We now move from critical reception to what we know of the response among ordinary readers. There exists some fragmentary but fascinating evidence concerning how powerfully MacLane's book influenced young females. The prominent journalist and essayist H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) referred to it having 'fluttered Vassar' (an upper-class women's college in Hudson Valley, New York).[169] A reviewer of MacLane's final book in 1917 reminisced about the impact the author had in her own alma mater back in 1902, where 'some of the older girls in the school went around constantly urging the kind devil to deliver them from something or somebody' and 'had a pompous little secret club and called themselves the M.M.L.'s'. She goes on: 'I didn't realize that it was all in a book. It seemed like some part of the social system of the universe … like the Masons.' She predicts 'hundreds of little groups, hundreds of individual M.M.L's' will read the new book 'and say to themselves "I, too …" '.[170] Several press reports in fact mention the existence of numerous such little societies. MacLane herself claimed in an interview that '[a]ll through the East there are Mary MacLane girl clubs.

They are studying my book.'[171] According to Cathryn Halverson, the members of the societies would read MacLane's writings, attempt to emulate them in texts of their own, and 'behave in a manner befitting their model'.[172] For example, on 4 December 1902, *Butte Inter Mountain* reported that a sixteen-year-old Chicago girl named Elsie Viola Larsen, a member of the local Mary MacLane society (which encompassed nine members of the same age), had been arrested for stealing a horse. She explained that she had committed this crime because she needed the experience in order to write a book. The group was led by a girl named Genevieve, and Larsen referred to it as an 'order'. She claimed she was sworn to secrecy (when asked about Genevieve's last name by her mother, she reportedly said 'I am breaking the vows of our order to tell you that'), and further spoke of the order as 'a sisterhood' and 'a court of honorable ladies' presided over by a 'queen' (Genevieve). Larsen moreover proclaimed to the reporter: 'I do not believe in marriage, it's absurd.' The other member of the society who also participated in the horse-theft stated ambitiously about her plans for the future: 'I do not propose to be a mere shop girl', asserting 'I will be somebody people will know and admire, I must honor my club.'[173]

A more serious case of the book's supposed influence was recounted by the *Tribune-Review* in the same month, under the heading 'The Harvest Begun: The Story of Mary McLane [*sic*] Drives Young Girl to Suicide in Kalamazoo, Michigan'. This very melodramatic piece describes how the young girl, '[m]orbidly mad from the reading of Mary MacLane's book in the nude' proceeded to satiate 'her physical appetite with a feast of confections and cakes and put an end to the vain imaginings and longings inspired by reading the diary of the neurotic Montana authoress by taking arsenic'. To really hammer the point home, the article claims that '[w]hen she was discovered writhing in the awful agony of arsenical poisoning, the book was still clasped in her hand'.[174] Another suicide was reportedly also caused by MacLane's dangerous text.[175] The lurid report of the MacLane-reading girl who ate sweets in the nude and then took arsenic reflects the close relation in contemporary discourse between food, carnality, the (naked) body, and a perilous Satanic rebellion with potentially fatal consequences. As Cathryn Halverson points out, MacLane wants 'readers to acknowledge the physicality of her body', which is 'no abstract, idealized entity'.[176] The anxiety this caused is clearly reflected in the article in question, where denial

of the body intersects with discourses on fasting and dieting as a near-substitute for religious asceticism, making the suicide come across as an act of tragic Satanic defiance against such ideals.

The Butte press soon started referring to 'MacLaneism' as a serious threat to the bodies and souls of female adolescents.[177] Clergymen preached sermons to diminish her harmful influence.[178] The public library of her hometown, eager to distance itself from the perceived moral corruption of its most famous daughter and protect the young from it, banned the book. The moral outrage extended far beyond Montana, though. As seen in many reviews and articles, worries about her influence were expressed more or less nationwide, and later some would insist her book really had asserted a powerful influence on a whole generation of American women. When MacLane passed away in 1929, the *Chicagoan* wrote of her as a figure 'important to any student of modern manners', with whom 'a revolution in manners, a transvaluation of values in the female code of behavior, started, or seemed to start'. Adding a touch of diabolical mystery, it also asked a question: 'What *mystic* or glandular voices spoke to Mary, bidding her to go forth into the world?'[179] This could be read as a playful reference to her figurative claims of being inspired by direct telepathic communication with the Devil.

Considering statements made to reporters by the MacLane Society member involved in the horse-theft—where she laid down that she refused to become 'a mere shop girl' and aimed to 'be somebody people will know and admire', adding 'I must honor my club'—it is obvious 'MacLaneism' changed the lives of some young girls, making them reject the future that convention had dictated for them.[180] It also appears *The Story* made a lasting impression on some prominent intellectual women of the time, as Alice B. Toklas (1877–1967), fifty-three years after the book's publication, compared herself to MacLane.[181]

'SCRATCH A MATCH BOY-WISE': MACLANE AS A (SATANIC) FEMINIST

In her 1977 feminist analysis of MacLane, Carolyn Mattern claims that if we look at the context MacLane wrote in, her ideas 'were, in large part, representative of the mainstream of feminist thought'.[182] In the final paragraph of her article she writes: 'Mary felt feelings intensely that were

shared by many women during an important era of social and cultural change. Her genius was that she was able to give these feelings literary expression.'[183] And, one can add, that she expressed them through a rather astonishing Satanic symbolism that fascinated the public.

I have highlighted the many ways in which MacLane criticized how patriarchal codes limited the options and freedom of women in her time. According to Mattern, 'a considerable number of Mary's readers in 1902 viewed *The Story* as a feminist document'.[184] This is indeed confirmed in several reviews, which praise MacLane as a righteously angry feminist voice. For example, well-known suffragette Mary Elizabeth Lease (1850–1933) declared her support of the young author, stating that MacLane is treading 'the way of broad freedom' and has produced a text displaying 'rare reasoning power at the right time upon the right subject'. Lease adds, 'Truth is shocking only to those who live in an atmosphere of falsehood, hence Mary MacLane is a distinct shock to the multitudes.' MacLane, Lease says, 'has succeeded in giving effete society a distinct change of vibrations, is serious, and must be taken seriously'.[185]Anti-feminists also picked up on the theme of women's liberation in the book and were apparently quite irritated by it. For example, the *New York Times* reprehended MacLane for grieving over not being able to 'scratch a match boy-wise', as they put it.[186] Criticism like this coupled with accolades from a high-profile suffragette like Lease no doubt strengthened the notion of MacLane as a feminist figure, and thus also cemented the connection between Satanism and feminism. In an interview concerning the girls who supposedly committed suicide because of her book, MacLane stated she had 'written something that creeps into the barrenness of their lives and illumines the darkness that is within them', and that girls 'of strong mentality' after reading it might 'realize that there isn't anything left for them', seemingly implying that they had come to understand the inescapable confinement and oppression of American women and felt crushed by this insight.[187]

When in high school, MacLane had contact with members of the Butte suffrage club, and her teacher Fannie Corbin, the 'anemone lady', belonged to a family of prominent local suffragists. Mattern states that MacLane had read a number of feminist authors in her teens. She does not mention how she knows this, or who these authors were.[188] As can be seen in an article she wrote in 1911, MacLane was at least at that time well acquainted with

feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Victoria Woodhull, and held them in high regard. The latter she calls a 'not-too-sane, but entirely picturesque and delightful woman' whom she finds inspiring and admirable.[189] One can but wonder if she had seen the famous caricature of Woodhull as Mrs Satan when she wrote *The Story*. Characteristically, she declares that no matter how highly she thinks of the suffragettes, and in spite of her support of their cause, she feels she herself would be unsuitable to vote, since she is 'governed only by my impulses and affections and led on by fascinations'. In her typical radical individualist manner, she then adds: 'I don't believe much in presidents, anyway. They don't seem to change anything, benefit anything, or "start" anything.'[190] Again, her position seems close to that of Moses Harman and the other anarchist feminists in *Lucifer*.

Mattern deplores that MacLane 'failed to carry her ideas to their logical conclusion or to extend her analysis beyond her own immediate situation' and never joined any feminist organization.[191] This statement is based on giving preferential right of interpretation of what constitutes "correct" feminism to a specific branch of it. From MacLane's perspective of radical individualism—which resulted in a stance of individualist feminism (which could perhaps also, considering her stressing of her 'genius', be designated elitist feminism)—joining a collectivist struggle would certainly not have been logical. Individualist feminism, however, even in its refusal of collectivism, will often have implications and effects that pertain to women as a collective.[192] This holds true in the case of Mary MacLane as well, as seen in her documented impact on young girls of her generation, and the previously quoted *Chicagoan* editorial about how she revolutionized female behaviour.

CONCLUDING WORDS

Like most other Satanic feminists, MacLane came from an upper middle-class background. Being a woman, she was not expected to pursue an intellectual career of any kind (except, perhaps, to become a schoolteacher). Quite well-read and with a gift for languages, she thus belonged to the marginal intelligentsia that Bruce Lincoln speaks of as the typical pool from which leaders of religions of resistance are drawn. Although secret orders and clubs were spontaneously organized around her writing, she, of course,

did not create a religion. MacLaneism, as the contemporary press called it, was nevertheless an influential cultural phenomenon in which attacks on Christianity, and the lauding of the Devil, in his capacity as an emancipator specifically of women, was a major feature. This counter-discourse does not draw on the Bible in a very detailed manner, though narratives like Genesis 3 are referenced (in this specific case as a parable of the sensual pleasure MacLane took in eating olives!). Christianity's concept of a reward in an afterlife is spurned by the young epicurean of Butte, Montana, who insists on pleasure, and lots of it, right now. To MacLane, Satan is a caring, passionate character associated with all sorts of this-worldly pleasures, while God is an absent, unapproachable personage. The former is portrayed using traditional demon lover imagery, which is however partly inverted: the Devil is seen as a bringer of positive change, and a sexual emancipator rather than someone destroying innocence using sexuality as his tool. Here, MacLane breaks with the mainstream of a long Christian and literary tradition, but adheres to the type of radical approach to the figure exemplified by Byron's *Heaven and Hell* or Gautier's 'La Morte amoureuse'. Further, in her longing for a savage, almost sadomasochistic, union with Satan, MacLane again crosses the boundaries of acceptable womanly behaviour and desire. Like Renée Vivien, Montana's self-proclaimed evil genius appears to have metaphorically identified Satan as the creator of woman's body, but not that of males. Also like Vivien, she was sexually attracted to women. This is more or less straightforwardly expressed in *The Story of Mary MacLane*, and in later publications it becomes even more explicit. She talks of it in terms of 'demoniac', 'pagan' urges, thus conforming to the demonization of homosexuality, but to some extent savouring this transgressive dimension just like her Decadent Parisian author colleague did.

It goes without saying that MacLane did not write in an intellectual vacuum. She had close friends who were suffragettes and Theosophists, and even described herself as a Theosophist. Her use of diabolical symbolism can therefore be seen as logical in light of how it reflects previous examples from these currents of thought. In all of these cases, Satan functions as a tool for cultural critique. MacLane utilizes the figure thus, for example, in a sort of Socratic dialogue with him, where she expounds on her scepticism towards institutions like marriage and describes such unions as degrading to women. Solemnly, she vows to the Devil that she will never marry. The book presents a sharp dichotomy between Satan's realm in the wilderness and the

oppressive domesticity of MacLane's home, filled with gendered chores and expectations. The barren wasteland becomes a place where she can be herself without having to worry about adhering to the demands of her to be a proper young girl. Her complete rejection of accepted femininity ranges from this repudiation of matrimony to equally harsh condemnations of 'girl-books', skirt-mending, and the sewing of buttons. The latter two activities may seem trivial, but had a high symbolic value that makes reviling them an extremely strong statement against the traditional socialization of young girls. The enthusiastic embrace of eating as an intensely sensual pleasure (framed in incendiary references to the Edenic Fall as delightful) can be read as a counter-discourse subverting contemporary ways of celebrating semi-anorexic self-denial and asceticism in a crypto-religious language. Relishing meat-eating in the extremely epicurean manner MacLane did also struck at the dominant contemporary ideal of non-carnal and almost incorporeal femininity. Of course, the unabashed eulogizing of sexuality outside of marriage did so even more.

Mary MacLane's debut book was a bestseller and, in conjunction with her provocative public persona, it became a cultural phenomenon that is said to have influenced the mentality of an entire generation of young American women. The central concept, the root metaphor if you will, of the counter-discourse she presented was the liberating Devil. MacLane used this figure as a symbol of escape from conventions, especially the demands put on women. Conservative reviewers were incensed by the scandalous contents of the book and principally took issue with its break with the norms of femininity. Feminists like the well-known Mary Elizabeth Lease praised exactly this feature. Seeing herself as a genius, MacLane shared the hard-line elitism and individualism of the Decadents. Her individualism also overlapped with the form of anarchism promoted by Moses Harman of *Lucifer* fame. The emphasis on autonomy and self-sufficiency moreover contains echoes of Romantic Satanism, which in the United States apparently inspired certain stanzas in one of Whitman's most famous poems. In MacLane's case, this attitude was expressed in claims of amorality and of being above the rules that regulate the lives of the masses. This meant that she was never a collectivist feminist who worried about the situation of non-genius women. It seems fully justified to consider her an individualist feminist, since her cultural critique to such a great extent focuses on patriarchal oppression and the subjugation of her sex in institutions like

marriage. Hence, it was hardly unexpected that reporters held her up as a man-hater. Many reviewers felt her rebellious ideas were especially indefensible coming from a female and suggested physical disciplining or confinement in a mental asylum as suitable measures to deal with this "hysterical" woman author. As it turned out, nothing of this sort was needed to silence the voice of Mary MacLane. Her own self-destructive tendencies and uncompromising desire to live life her own way prompted a confrontation with the realities of turn-of-the-century American society that soon left her somewhat broken. She continued to write, and wrote well, but was very much a one-book author, who never again scaled the same heights of success and fame. Her star rose fast and faded fast, yet several contemporary testimonies indicate that many female lives were reshaped fundamentally in the brief light of that Satanically rebellious celestial body.

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[1] Quoted in Ker 2003, p. 144.

[2] MacLane 1902, e.g. pp. 26, 32, 35, 97, 104, 110, 128, 137, 167, 237, 319.

[3] In spite of her enormous popularity back in 1902, MacLane is today little remembered even by scholars of the American literature of the period. Hence, there is a surprisingly limited amount of research on her. Kathryne Beth Tovo's 2000 dissertation is the most thorough examination of her writings, as well as their reception. Cathryn Halverson published what is probably the first major scholarly article on MacLane in 1994, devoted part of her 1997 dissertation to her, and later reworked this text into a 2004 book chapter. Additionally, there are three other brief articles, with a primarily biographical focus (Wheeler 1977; Mattern 1977; Miller 1982), and short discussions in books on wider topics (Faderman 1981/1985; Faderman 1995; Spacks 1972/1976).

[4] On Strindberg's ambiguous construction of autobiographic 'authenticity', see Johnsson 2010, pp. 66–69, 77.

[5] MacLane 1902, pp. 133–134.

[6] Rosemont 1997, pp. 2–3; Wheeler 1977, p. 22; MacLane 1902, p. 9.

[7] Halverson 1994, p. 37; Tovo 2000, p. 32. MacLane's publishing house, directly inspired by famous English Decadent (at least, that was how many perceived it) journal *The Yellow Book*, also published the lavish *Chap-Book* journal, and one of its illustrators was borrowed from its overseas model: arch-Decadent Aubrey Beardsley (Halverson 1994, p. 56; Tovo 2000, p. 140). The actual time-span between the receipt of MacLane's manuscript and a finished book arriving from the printer seems to have been two weeks, which is still astonishingly quick. Tovo 2000, p. 170.

[8] Halverson 2004, p. 172; Halverson 1997, pp. 125–126. On the edits to the manuscript, see Pruitt 1993, pp. 191–192. Pruitt's edition of the book follows the original typescript, thus restoring, for example, passages the editor felt were 'too controversial, or in bad taste' (Pruitt 1993, p. 191). Nonetheless, I have used the 1902 edition here, since this was the widely available one and the impact of the text is of major interest to me. One significant change was the omission of MacLane's dedication: 'To The

Devil / Of the Steel-Gray Eyes, Who One / Day May Come—Who Knows?— / I Dedicate, with the Mad Love of / A Young Weary Wooden Heart, / This, My Book' (Pruitt 1993, p. 192).

[9] Halverson 2004, pp. 28–29. The royalty sum is given in *The Literary Digest*, 26 July 1902 (all unsigned newspaper articles are here referenced by the name of the newspaper and the publication date). Tovo offers further information on sales figures and estimates sales may have approached 100,000 copies. She also notes book sales were in decline at the time, and a few years later, in 1908, not many books sold as many as 50,000 copies, making MacLane's success quite extraordinary. In her opinion, the report that it was translated into thirty languages is, however, somewhat unreliable (Tovo 2000, pp. 33–34, 36). Looking in library catalogues (BnF, DNB, BNE, BNCF, Danish Royal Library, Swedish Royal Library), I have been unable to find French, German, Spanish, Italian, Danish, or Swedish editions.

[10] Tovo 2000, p. 143.

[11] Wheeler 1977, p. 28. That MacLane had become conservative may have been a slight exaggeration, considering that the book contained, for example, the following exchange: ' "Whom does conscience make cowards of?" said I. "Dead men and fools," said my friend Annabel Lee' (MacLane 1903, pp. 125–126).

[12] Wheeler 1977, p. 32; Halverson 1994, p. 53; Halverson 2004, pp. 72–73. As Halverson points out, with the film MacLane went even further in the 'coalescence of text and person' that she had become known for (Halverson 1997, p. 163). No copy of the film seems to have been preserved (Tovo 2000, p. 18). It is important to keep in mind that the title was not quite as scandalous as it sounds, since the phrase 'make love' at the time referred to romance rather than sexual intercourse. Tovo 2000, pp. 345–346.

[13] Halverson 2004, pp. 67, 73; Tovo 2000, p. 354. On MacLane selling her body, see Halverson 2004, p. 182; Tovo 2000, p. 336. Reports of her death are contradictory, complications after an abdominal operation or suicide are other suggestions (Halverson 2004, p. 74; Tovo 2000, pp. 358–361). On MacLane's gambling, see Miller 1982, p. 52. It seems she was a skilled gambler and tried to make a living off it for a while.

[14] Tovo 2000, pp. 38–39.

[15] Ibid., pp. 37–38, 48. *Damn! The Story of Willie Complain* was also published anonymously, by Butte journalist Robert T. Shores.

[16] Anonymous [McKown] 1903, p. 17. Satan here also mentions pleasures like giggling and 'the supreme beatitude of a girl's first love-letter' as things MacLane has missed out on by not conforming to the normative version of being a girl (ibid.). Tovo reads this passage differently from me and claims that it 'suggests that the author joins MacLane in regarding these activities as trivial and such assumptions about gender as flawed' and argues that Satan 'often seems to concur with MacLane's points' (Tovo 2000, pp. 310–311). It is here worth mentioning that Satan consistently criticizes MacLane for proclaiming herself a genius, saying he 'feels outraged at the audacity of a morbid, morose, peripatetic, world-despising creature, who essays to masquerade under the crown of genius' (Anonymous [McKown] 1903, p. 10).

[17] There is also a nasty sketch of the intellectual females in a Woman's Club, which Satan attends dressed as a woman himself, where the lacking femininity of its President is brought to the fore. Anonymous [McKown] 1903, pp. 137–160.

[18] Ibid., p. 42.

[19] Ibid., pp. 172, 171. For further appearances of the motif of woman as Satan's helper, see ibid., pp. 50, 98–100, 113–114.

[20] Halverson 1994, p. 52.

[21] Much of the material used here is available online through the Library of Congress website. Some of the articles, however, are only obtainable directly from smaller, specialized library collections. I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of the interlibrary loan department at Stockholm University (especially Tomas Larsson) and Brian Shovers, Library manager at the Montana Research Center, with tracking down some of the more hard-to-find newspaper articles concerning MacLane.

[22] *The San Francisco Call*, 17 August 1902.

[23] *The Literary Digest*, 26 July 1902; *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, 14 August 1929; Garland quoted in Halverson 2004, p. 31.

[24] *The Republic*, 18 May 1902.

[25] *The Evening World*, 25 November 1908. An example of a reviewer who celebrated her as a genius is Clarence S. Darrow of the *Chicago American*, who called her book 'little short of a miracle' and 'marvelous', declaring its author 'one of the world's geniuses' (Darrow 1902).

[26] Some examples of the tendency to give quotes from the book concerning Satan a prominent place in reviews: *Goodwin's Weekly*, 24 May 1902; *The St. Paul Globe*, 4 May 1902; *The World*, 8 July 1902; *The Literary Digest*, 26 July 1902.

[27] *Hartford Herald*, 7 May 1902; *The World*, 12 August 1902.

[28] *Hartford Herald*, 7 May 1902.

[29] *The World*, 8 July 1902.

[30] Monroe 1902.

[31] Wurdz 1904, p. 23. Gideon Wurdz was the pen name of Charles Wayland Towne (1875–1965).

[32] *Anaconda Standard*, 4 May 1902.

[33] Ibid.

[34] *The World*, 23 July 1902.

[35] MacLane 1902, p. 1. Peripatetic, in reference to philosophy, can mean Aristotelian, but it seems more likely MacLane uses the word in the everyday sense of restless wandering, since taking long walks while thinking forms part of her daily routine and she later talks of being a 'moral vagabond' (p. 16).

[36] Ibid., p. 162.

[37] MacLane 1902, p. 58. The Law of Compensation seems to be a reference to Emerson. For a useful brief introduction to this notion in Emerson's thinking, see Pommer 1962.

[38] MacLane 1902, pp. 94–95.

[39] Ibid., p. 3.

[40] Halverson 2004, pp. 21–23.

[41] MacLane 1902, p. 6.

[42] Ibid., p. 14.

[43] Ibid., p. 15.

[44] Ibid., p. 46.

[45] Halverson 2004, p. 48.

[46] MacLane 1902, p. 21.

[47] Cf. Lewis 1796/1998, pp. 412–413, 415.

[48] MacLane 1902, p. 132.

[49] Ibid., pp. 25–26.

[50] Ibid., pp. 108–109.

[51] Ibid., pp. 45–46.

[52] Ibid., pp. 52–54.

[53] Ibid., p. 77.

[54] Ibid., p. 27.

[55] Ibid., p. 31.

[56] Cf. chapters 3, 7.

[57] Halverson 2004, p. 48. For examples of how MacLane connects the wilderness and desolate places like graveyards to Satan, see MacLane 1902, pp. 20, 31, 53, 153, 155, 236.

[58] MacLane 1902, pp. 27, 28. When waxing lyrical over the 'beautiful sensuality in the figure of a young woman lying on the ground under a warm setting sun', MacLane similarly contrasts it with a man's body: 'A man may lie on the ground—but that is as far as it goes. A man would go to sleep, probably, like a dog or a pig. … But then, a man has not a good young feminine body to feel with' (p. 31).

[59] The similarity to Renée Vivien's ideas in 'La Genèse profane', published the same year, is obvious, but cannot have been caused by a direct influence in either direction.

[60] MacLane 1902, p. 39.

[61] Ibid., p. 38.

[62] Ibid., p. 100.

[63] Ibid., p. 179.

[64] Ibid., p. 182.

[65] Tovo 2000, pp. 79–80. A possible exception is the chapter in the parody *The Devil's Letters to Mary MacLane* that treats Sappho. Anonymous [McKown] 1903, pp. 62–71.

[66] Faderman 1995, p. 103.

[67] Faderman 1981/1985, p. 299.

[68] Ibid., p. 300. See also Halverson 1994, p. 49. For a critique of Faderman's view of an 'age of innocence' when it came to lesbianism, see Behling 2001, pp. 28–29.

[69] *The St. Paul Globe*, 25 May 1902.

[70] In this article, she states, 'I would rather write about women because men are so nearly all alike and are such conventional masculine beasts, anyway.' However, 'the editor of this neat sheet said men, for this article (it'll be women in another one)' (MacLane 1910b). In the follow-up article in the same newspaper (15 May) she stated that 'for inexplicable reasons the women I have known and loved have been the crucial incidents in my life, the real and informing events', adding that they are 'more interesting to me than men, because they're more complex, more subtle, … harder to understand'.

She also proposes that millions of women 'conventionally marry some agreeable husband' but give to their women friends 'their tenderness of heart'. She also retells a conversation with a female friend in which 'the blood of Sappho' is mentioned, which could be taken as a further indirect reference to lesbianism (MacLane 1910c).

[71] MacLane 1917, p. 276.

[72] Ibid., p. 278.

[73] Ibid., p. 277.

[74] Ibid., p. 277.

[75] We can, again, note that the commonly used term for a homosexual at the time was 'invert' (Tovo 2000, pp. 9–10), and MacLane, like Vivien, was fittingly enough both a sexual and a religious invert (through her Satanism).

[76] According to Kathryne Tovo, MacLane's only long-term romantic relationship was with Caroline Branson, an older woman living in Massachusetts, with whom the author was involved for six years. Tovo 2000, p. 52.

[77] MacLane 1902, p. 311.

[78] Ibid., p. 71.

[79] Ibid., pp. 73, 74.

[80] Ibid., p. 72.

[81] Ibid., p. 155.

[82] Ibid., p. 293.

[83] Ibid., p. 291. Elsewhere, MacLane similarly asks, 'What is good? What is evil? The words are merely words, with word-meanings. Truth is Love, and Love is the only Truth, and Love is the one thing out of all that is real' (p. 46).

[84] Ibid., p. 139.

[85] Ibid., p. 222.

[86] Ibid., p. 262.

[87] Ibid., pp. 81–86. Quote on p. 86.

[88] Brumberg [1988]/2000, p. 365.

[89] Showalter 1985, pp. 127, 129. Quotes on p. 129.

[90] MacLane 1902, p. 160.

[91] Ibid., pp. 295–296.

[92] Ibid., p. 297.

[93] Ibid., p. 94.

[94] Halverson 1994, p. 46.

[95] The 'red, red line' that MacLane refers to (e.g. MacLane 1902, p. 34), and which Halverson uses as support for her reading, seems to me more a reference to a longing for adventure, seeing what lies beyond the horizon, rather than an other-worldly philosophical concept.

[96] Kiessling 1974, pp. 23–28, 35–36.

[97] Ibid., pp. 37–41.

[98] Craciun 1995, p. 91. Craciun is here encapsulating an argument put forward by Toni Reed, which she dismisses as reductive.

[99] Heiland 2004, p. 183. Heiland describes the Gothic genre thus with reference to Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism* (1998).

[100] Craciun 1995, p. 86.

[101] MacLane 1902, p. 152.

[102] Ibid., p. 154.

[103] Byron 1991, p. 346.

[104] Azaziel appears to be a form of the name Azazel (Lev. 16: 7–9), identified by, among others, Origen as a demonic spirit. He also appears as such in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (I. 533–536). Samiasa is probably an alternative spelling of Samyaza, an angel who, in apocryphal literature, was cast out of Heaven for taking a human wife, and whose name means 'infamous rebellion'. Both Azazel and Samyaza figure prominently in the *Book of Enoch*. Russell 1977, pp. 186–192. See also Page 1995, pp. 83–84.

[105] Byron 1991, p. 347.

[106] Ibid., p. 373. Concerning 'Jehovah's wrath', one mortal asks: 'Can rage and justice join in the same path?' (p. 376). A chorus of mortals, about to be drowned, complains, 'If he hath made earth, let it be his shame, / To make a world for torture . . .', and then blasphemously refers to how Adam sang 'his first hymn of slavery' to God (p. 379).

[107] Ibid., p. 376.

[108] Ibid.

[109] MacLane 1902, p. 95.

[110] Ibid., p. 96.

[111] Halverson 2004, p. 49.

[112] MacLane 1902, p. 94.

[113] *The St. Paul Globe*, 13 July 1902.

[114] *The St. Paul Globe*, 31 August 1902.

[115] *The World*, 22 July 1902.

[116] Mattern 1977, p. 58.

[117] Gale 1902.

[118] MacLane 1910a. MacLane here writes about a 'little London Jew' she has been romantically involved with, and says that '[h]e was seductive, but not the conquering devil of my dreams'. Even here, she does not really make it fully clear whether this conquering Devil is to be understood as a mortal man or not. She comments further: 'The devil I once wanted never arrived—him of the steel-gray eyes—but so many imitations of him presented themselves' (ibid.).

[119] *The World*, 12 August 1902.

[120] Tovo 2000, pp. 148–149. Quote on p. 148.

[121] It is also worth mentioning that the content is hardly very Satanic, and that the 1906 book version was published as *The Cynic's Word Book*. It came out under the title *The Devil's Dictionary* only in 1911.

[122] Tovo 2000, pp. 149–150. Additionally, her assertion that 'most new religions … viewed Satan as the god of wisdom' (p. 150) is wildly inaccurate, as the claim is seemingly meant to encompass Theosophy, Spiritualism, and occultism in general, as well as other, unspecified, currents and groups. Only when it comes to Theosophy was there any truth to this at the time.

[123] MacLane 1902, p. 261.

[124] *The World*, 23 July 1902.

[125] MacLane 1902, p. 191.

[126] Ibid., p. 274.

[127] Tovo 2000, pp. 152–153.

[128] *The Washington Times*, 11 May 1902; Darrow 1902. MacLane herself denied ever having read Whitman in a 1902 interview (Gale 1902), a claim that may or may not have been true. See also Tovo 2000, p. 108, for another example of how contemporaries assumed Whitman had been an influence.

[129] Whitman 1868, p. 379. There are several versions of this poem. Some lines from it appeared already before 1855. It was published in full in 1871, and revised in 1881.

[130] Halverson 1994, pp. 38–39. Eiselein 1998, pp. 112–113.

[131] As discussed in chapter 6, Egerton distanced herself from feminism, but still advocated sexual freedom for women, the latter in a way quite similar to MacLane (who, however, never explicitly rejected feminism, but rather, as we will see, expressed positive opinions of it).

[132] It is also possible to argue that the famous MacLane might have influenced these canonical male authors, since her 'Satanist' work was published before theirs.

[133] Byron 1991, pp. 235–275; cf. MacLane 1902, pp. 289–301.

[134] Thorslev 1963, pp. 251–256; Schock 2003, p. 38.

[135] E.g. *Anaconda Standard*, 4 May 1902.

[136] Halverson 2004, p. 49.

[137] MacLane 1902, p. 64.

[138] Ibid., p. 283.

[139] Ibid., p. 294.

[140] Ibid., pp. 145–150.

[141] Ibid., p. 298. His comment that '[i]t is to be hoped you are not "intellectual", which is an unpardonable trait' is a bit more cryptical. She vehemently denies belonging to this category: 'Intellectual people are detestable. They have pale faces and bad stomachs and bad livers, and if they are women their corsets are sure to be too tight, and probably black, and if they are men they are *soft*, which is worse' (p. 298).

[142] Ibid., p. 227.

[143] Ibid., p. 225.

[144] Ibid., pp. 227–228.

[145] Ibid., p. 228.

[146] Ibid., p. 267.

[147] MacLane 1917, p. 2.

[148] MacLane 1902, pp. 146–148, 304–309.

[149] *The Jennings Daily Record*, 8 July 1902.

[150] Ibid. Some of these quotes had earlier been published in *The St. Paul Globe*, 25 May 1902.

[151] *Hartford Herald*, 7 May 1902.

[152] *The St. Paul Globe*, 25 May 1902.

[153] Ibid.

[154] MacLane to Stone, probably Spring 1903, quoted in Tovo 2000, p. 265.

[155] *The Jennings Daily Record*, 8 July 1902.

[156] Paul 1902. See also *Hartford Herald*, 7 May 1902; *The St. Paul Globe*, 25 May 1902.

[157] MacLane 1902, p. 59.

[158] *Goodwin's Weekly*, 24 May 1902.

[159] *The Jennings Daily Record*, 8 July 1902; *Evening Bulletin* (Honolulu), 4 October 1902. For further examples of such descriptions, very much a mainstay of reports on MacLane, see *The St. Paul Globe*, 25 May 1902; *The World*, 28 April 1902.

[160] *The St. Paul Globe*, 13 July 1902. What she in fact says in the interview is something more specific and qualified: she loathes 'modern man' and intellectual men, but adores strong, virile figures like Napoleon, and is yet to meet a man who could possibly interest her. In another interview, she stated 'I don't like men. I met a man in Chicago with whom I should like to have been in love … but I couldn't fall in love with him' (Gale 1902).

[161] *The St. Paul Globe*, 13 July 1902.

[162] *Blue Grass Blade*, 17 August 1902 (quotes in full the Catholic reviewer's text, published in a different newspaper, and then responds to it).

[163] Halverson 2004, p. 33.

[164] *The Jennings Daily Record*, 8 July 1902; *The Republic*, 16 July 1902. Another example is the brief notice in the *St. Paul Globe*, 4 May 1902, where it is stated: 'They have another name for what ails her at Rochester, Minn.', a reference to Rochester State Hospital, an insane asylum.

[165] *The New York Herald*, 28 May 1902, as quoted in Halverson 2004, p. 32.

[166] Tovo 2000, pp. 230, 312–313.

[167] On Gothic heroines as hysterical, see Showalter 2004, pp. 261–262.

[168] In the mid-nineteenth century, an older view of hysteria as the result of unsatisfied sexual and maternal drives had gone through a revival (Showalter 1985, pp. 131–132). At this time, quite a few doctors therefore advised sexual relations as a cure to the condition (Matlock 1994, p. 157). All the way up to the turn of the century, this remained the reigning popular opinion and contributed to hysteria's connotations of shame and scandal (Evans 1991, p. 10). Charcot, whose rise to fame began in the 1870s, did not see it quite this way. Yet, in spite of his disclaimers that hysteria was not sexual in nature per se, he still linked it to female sexuality by singling out the ovarian region as a 'hysterogenic zone' (Showalter 1985, p. 150). It has hence been asserted that the connection to sexuality 'echoed in the halls of the hospital as an unspoken but common assumption about etiology'. Freud would later even claim he had overheard Charcot sharing this knowledge with a colleague when he thought no one could hear him. Evans 1991, p. 26.

[169] Quoted in Halverson 2004, p. 32.

[170] Butcher 1917.

[171] *Butte Intermountain*, 24 May 1902.

[172] Halverson 1997, p. 139.

[173] *Butte Inter Mountain*, 4 December 1902. Larsen was less impressed by MacLane's use of Satan, however, remarking that 'she talks too much about the devil. I can't see that she means much of anything, but it is foolish to write like that' (ibid.).

[174] *Tribune-Review* (Butte), 17 May 1902.

[175] Halverson 2004, p. 175. Tovo expresses scepticism as to whether the suicides really occurred, but concludes that this is ultimately of less importance than the strong reactions to these claims. Tovo 2000, pp. 213–214.

[176] Halverson 1994, p. 44.

[177] Tovo 2000, pp. 206–207.

[178] Halverson 2004, p. 36; Tovo 2000, p. 146. It is not clear where—in Montana or somewhere else—the clergymen were preaching.

[179] *The Chicagoan*, 31 August 1929, my italics.

[180] Tovo 2000, pp. 214–215. Quote on p. 215.

[181] Ibid., p. 323.

[182] Mattern 1977, p. 54.

[183] Ibid., p. 63.

[184] Ibid., p. 57.

[185] *The World*, 10 July 1902.

[186] Paul 1902.

[187] *Butte Intermountain*, 24 May 1902.

[188] Mattern 1977, p. 57.

[189] MacLane 1911.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Mattern 1977, p. 57.

[192] Like me, Rosemont also views MacLane as an individualist feminist (Rosemont 1997, p. 7). Rosemont is the only person I have seen referring to MacLane thus. I had arrived at this conclusion independently concerning MacLane when first reading *The Story* several years before I saw Rosemont's text.

Witchcraft was hung, in History
But History and I
Find all the Witchcraft that we need
Around us, every Day—
EMILY DICKINSON (ca. 1883)[1]

11

Sylvia Townsend Warner's Liberating Devil

INTRODUCTION

Sylvia Townsend Warner's (1893–1978) debut novel *Lolly Willowes; or, The Loving Huntsman* (1926), set in the first decades of the twentieth century, tells the tale of Laura 'Lolly' Willowes, who ends up becoming a witch liberated and empowered by Satan. The book caused a major stir and received highly favourable reviews. As we shall see, Warner's novel is quite possibly the most explicit and conspicuous literary example ever of programmatic Satanic feminism. It will be demonstrated how Warner drew on contemporary understandings of witch cults and worked very much within a pre-existing tradition of Satanic feminism. Hence, I will focus in particular on aspects of the text that relate to the motifs we have seen repeatedly in preceding chapters, such as demonic lesbianism, a view of Christianity as a central pillar of patriarchy, and nature being coded as Satan's feminine realm where he can offer immunity from the pressures of a male-dominated society. The chapter closes with a consideration of the reception of the book.

'AN ALARMING LADY': THE LIFE AND CAREER OF SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

Following the triumph of her first novel, Warner went on to be a highly prolific writer, producing nine books of poetry, a further six novels, ten volumes of short stories and various other publications. *Lolly Willowes*, however, would remain her greatest success.[2] Although not exactly a famous book, it is enough of a classic to have been republished by Penguin, and it sold well on its initial appearance. In spite of this novel continuously being brought back into print and finding new readers, as well as being highly regarded by critics, Warner cannot be considered a canonical writer. Several reasons for this have been suggested, for example, that her œuvre as a whole defies genre categorization and that she was a lesbian and an active communist (who admired Stalin well into the 1970s at that).

Warner's father was a respected history teacher and housemaster at Harrow, a prestigious London boarding school. She was privately tutored, mostly by him, and displayed a keen intellect from an early age. Her childhood was, it would seem, a happy one, except for some complications in the relationship with her mother towards the end of it. By the age of seven, she was reading the Bible and gaily quoting from it—occasionally on quite unsuitable occasions.[3] We can note here that her father was a convinced atheist, and it has been suggested that his (especially at Harrow) unconventional outlook must have influenced his daughter's similarly unorthodox thinking later in life. Concerning her attitude towards Christianity, one of her biographers describes it as 'a finely-tuned contempt bordering on loathing'.[4] As a teenager, Warner developed a taste for extravagant fashion—an expression of her budding extreme individualism—such as huge and elaborately decorated hats.[5] Judging by a friend's description of her appearance when they first met in 1922, she remained as extravagant at that time: 'an alarming lady with clear and minatory voice, dark, dripping with tassels—like a black and slender Barb caparisoned for war—with jingling ear-rings, swinging fox-tails, black silk acorn hanging from umbrella, black tasselled gloves, dog chains, key rings'.[6] This love of outrageousness in dress perhaps gives some indication that she was a person who would very much enjoy the provocation of celebrating Satan and would not mind if it brought her some measure of notoriety.

When Warner was nineteen, she became the mistress of one of her father's friends, musicologist Percy P. Buck, who was twenty-two years her senior, married, and a father of five. Their secret relationship would last for seventeen years. Warner, who had musical training, planned to study

composition with Arnold Schönberg, but her plans were disrupted by the outbreak of the war. Most likely with assistance from Buck she instead came to be one of the editors of *Tudor Church Music*, an influential ten-volume musicological work. This assignment, which took twelve years to complete (rather than the initial estimate of five years), helped pay her bills during her first years as an author. Her debut was a collection of poems, *The Espalier* (1925), followed by *Lolly Willowes* the year after. Subsequent novels, as mentioned, never matched the commercial success of the first, but even so her writing—among other things over 150 short stories for *The New Yorker* through the years—provided a steady and ample income. In 1930, she and poetess Valentine Ackland fell in love and spent the following thirty-nine years in a stormy relationship. They joined the Communist Party in 1935 and rose to sufficient prominence there to both be monitored by MI5 during World War II.[7] Warner continued writing almost up until her death in 1978 and remained actively engaged in political work nearly as long (figure 11.1).

FIGURE 11.1 Sylvia Townsend Warner at work. Photo courtesy of Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

‘UNGODLY HALLOWEDNESS’: THE SECRET LONGING OF LAURA WILLOWES

The story of Laura Willowes is told in a naturalistic and matter-of-fact style, seasoned with much wit, irony, and satire. It begins by treating everyday happenings in a low-key manner and ends in a near-seamless amalgamation of the realistic and the fantastic. Although it deals with some very complicated and difficult themes, the language is accessible and the plot deceptively simple. *Lolly Willowes* is a humorous novel, as are Warner’s other early

works, and reportedly she sometimes laughed out loud as she wrote them, but it is also imbued with a moral tone that is certainly no joke.[8]

The protagonist is initially described by the authorial voice as 'a gentle creature', and she lives with her ageing father even though she is in her late twenties. After the demise of her father, Laura goes to London where she is integrated into the household of her brother and sister-in-law. Initially, they hope to marry her off as soon as possible, since she is already 28 years old.[9] Laura's upbringing, however, has furthered 'a temperamental indifference to getting married'.[10] When her family tries to pair her off with an eligible bachelor of their acquaintance, she scares him away with bizarre remarks about how likely it is he is a werewolf.[11] Most of the first part of the novel is taken up by descriptions of the boredom and emptiness of Laura's life. It also satirizes the bigotry of the social class that Laura at this stage is very much a representative of. For a little over the first two-thirds, the novel contains but the subtlest hints of the motifs associated with witches that will later become the central concern. The narrative is played out on a highly prosaic level and the focus is on sketching a detailed psychological portrait of Laura's discomfort in her cultural environment. The last third of the tale takes a very different turn and depicts how Satan frees her from the bonds of patriarchy.

Already at a young age, Laura is ill at ease with the demands put upon women and laments having to retire from the world in order to become a proper young lady, who no longer climbs trees and jumps over haycocks. Before her imminent introduction into society through attending her first ball, she reflects upon the strangeness of the term 'coming-out', which means, 'as far as she could see, and when once the champagne bottles were emptied and the flimsy ball-dress lifted off the thin shoulders, going-in'.[12]

As an adolescent, Laura reads all the books in the family library, among them 'Glanvil on Witches'.[13] She later develops an interest in 'the forsaken byways of the rural pharmacopœia' and becomes an avid gatherer of medicinal herbs—hinting at her as yet unrealized vocation to become a witch.[14] This is something she can no longer indulge in after moving to London, not even during the family's vacations: 'She would have liked to go by herself for long walks inland and find strange herbs, but she was too useful to be allowed to stray.'[15] The unhappy Laura starts experiencing a recurrent "fever" during autumns:

> At these times she was subject to a peculiar kind of day-dreaming, so vivid as to be almost a hallucination: that she was in the country, at dusk, and alone, and strangely at peace. … Her mind was groping after something that eluded her experience, a something that was shadowy and menacing, and yet in some way congenial; a something that lurked in waste places, that was hinted at by the sound of water gurgling through deep channels and by voices of birds of ill-omen. Loneliness, dreariness, aptness for arousing a sense of fear, a kind of ungodly hallowedness—these were the things that called her thoughts away from the comfortable fireside.[16]

In the winter of 1921, when she is forty-seven years old, she decides to move to Great Mop, a secluded hamlet in the Chilterns (an area in west of London), much to her family's chagrin. All attempts to dissuade her fail.[17] Her nephew Titus jokes that she will now 'start hunting for catnip again, and become the village witch', a suggestion that renders the reply 'How lovely!' from his aunt.[18] She takes rooms in the cottage of Mr. and Mrs. Leak. The latter, it turns out, shares Laura's liking for distillations.[19] This is a first hint that something is witch-like about her landlady. Indeed, there seems to be something strange about the whole village, which keeps oddly late hours.[20] At this point, the metaphorical witchcraft references also start to intensify. When Laura begins helping Mr. Saunter, one of her neighbours, with his poultry-farm, it makes her feel 'wise and potent' and she recalls the henwife in fairy-tales, who is 'close cousin to the witch' but practices 'her art under cover of henwifery'. She also comes to think of the Russian witches who 'live in small huts mounted upon three giant hen's legs', and when walking back from her chores she does it 'as obliviously as though she were flitting home on a broomstick'.[21] Finding joy in the simple country life, she comes to realize how miserable she has been in London and that her family were tyrants unjustly lording over her.[22] She has no intention of forgiving them, though she establishes 'the injury they had done her was not done by them', but by grander oppressive structures: 'If she were to start forgiving she must needs forgive Society, the Law, the Church, … the Old Testament, . . . Prostitution, … and half a dozen other useful props of civilisation.'[23]

This conclusion has been foreshadowed by an earlier scene, in which Warner describes how Laura's family goes to church on Sundays, where 'they were wound up for the week in much the same manner [as the clock her brother winds up every Sunday morning]'.[24] Christianity, then, keeps people in line and effects a mechanical conformity. It is an ideology that fixes women in a position of no agency, and where everyone, even women themselves, feels this is the natural and desirable state of things. She also highlights the

‘vindictive sentiments’ and austerity of morning service, but adds somewhat laconically that these features were less pronounced in the evening service.[25]

When her nephew comes to visit her, and decides to take up lodgings in the village in order to write a book about Fuseli, she once more feels the weight of her chains being fastened upon her.[26] When he leaves his pipe and tobacco pouch on her mantelpiece, she perceives them as ‘the orb and sceptre of an usurping monarch’.[27] Titus declares he too loves the countryside, and she is repelled by the ‘possessive and masculine love’ for it that is his, in spite of the fact that she knows he has a kind heart and means her nothing but good.[28] In despair, she cries out in the woods: ‘I won’t go back. I won’t. … Oh! Is there no help?’ She gets the feeling that ‘if any grimly favourable power had been evoked by her cry; then surely a compact had been made, and the pledge irrevocably given’.[29]

‘A LIFE OF ONE’S OWN’: THE LIBERATION, AUTONOMY, AND FREE WILL OF A WITCH

At this point comes the unexpected—save for the hints already mentioned, which are interspersed throughout 167 pages—turn in the tale. A kitten makes its way into the cottage and scratches Laura’s hand so that she starts bleeding. This might seem less than remarkable, but the conclusion she draws from it is startling:

> She, Laura Willowes, in England, in the year 1922, had entered into a compact with the Devil. The compact was made, and affirmed, and sealed with the round seal of her blood. She remembered the woods, she remembered her wild cry for help, and the silence that followed it, as though in ratification. … Couched within the wood, sleeping through the long sultry afternoon, had lain the Prince of Darkness; sleeping, or meditating some brooding thunderstorm of his own. Her voice of desperate need had aroused him, his silence had answered her with a pledge. And now, as a sign of the bond between them, he had sent his emissary. … The kitten was her familiar spirit, and sucked her blood.[30]

Her mind at ease, she is relieved to think she ‘need not fear Titus now, nor any of the Willowses. They could not drive her out, or enslave her spirit any more.’[31] Interestingly, being in league with Satan does not at all instil the expected horror in Lolly. Instead, she spurns the common attitudes towards the Devil as part of the same oppressive structure of bigotry and bowing to social convention that she has broken free from: ‘She felt neither fear nor disgust. A witch of but a few hours’ standing she rejected with the scorn of the initiate

all the bugaboo surmises of the public.'[32] Satan seems to her a saviour, and Lolly thinks of herself that

> [s]he had been like the girl in the fairy tale whose godmother gave her a little nutshell box and told her to open it in the hour of utter distress. … So, unrealised, had Laura been carrying her talisman in her pocket. She was a witch by vocation. … What else had set her upon her long solitary walks, her quests for powerful and forgotten herbs, her brews and distillations?[33]

Yet, some more hesitant thoughts about Satan appear shortly thereafter. Lolly thinks of how, 'exchanging threatenings and mockeries for sweet persuasions, Satan had at last taken pity upon her bewilderment', and how he, 'the loving huntsman', had been 'following her with his eyes', 'preferring to watch until he could lure her into his hand'.[34] These thoughts end with decisive words signalling that she is nonetheless pleased: 'All finalities, whether good or evil, bestow a feeling of relief; and now, understanding how long the chase had lasted, Laura felt a kind of satisfaction at having been popped into the bag.'[35] When Laura meets Satan for the first time, he appears as a man with a brown and wrinkled face, who looks like a gamekeeper, 'for he wore gaiters and a corduroy coat'.[36] He vows to her: 'Remember, Miss Willowes, that I shall always be very glad to help you. You have only to ask me.'[37] She feels that 'speaking so quietly and simply, Satan had come to renew his promise and to reassure her', and she speculates he would perhaps 'have her to know that to those who serve him he appears no longer as hunter, but as guardian'.[38]

Her nephew, the invader of her tranquil life in the village, has her do all sorts of handiwork and run errands for him.[39] The Devil helps solve the problem, making Titus give up his life in Great Mop, and she ponders this fact: 'It had pleased Satan to come to her aid. Considering carefully, she did not see who else would have done so. Custom, public opinion, law, church and state—all would have shaken their massive heads against her plea, and sent her back to bondage.'[40] Warner here reiterates more or less the same list as earlier of oppressive cultural institutions and holds up Satan as a positive counterpoint to them. After the trouble with the infringing nephew is resolved, she happily thinks of her 'natural leaning towards the Devil', and how she is one of 'the people of Satan'.[41]

At the end of the novel, Warner again instils doubt in the reader about Satan, when he explains to Laura that she is in his power: 'No servant of mine can feel remorse, or doubt, or surprise. You may be quite easy, Laura: you

will never escape me, for you can never wish to.'[42] She finds this answer pleasing and could, of course, not respond otherwise if his words are to be believed. In a way, it seems Satan has robbed her of her free will at the same time that he liberated her from the constraints of family and society. He then, somewhat paradoxically, tells her: 'I am doing everything in my power to be agreeable and reassuring', though one wonders why this would be necessary if she is really as irrevocably his as he just stated.[43] Laura's satisfied view of having been chosen by the Devil seems quite autonomous, however, and she explains about witches:

> And think, Satan, what a compliment you pay her, pursuing her soul, lying in wait for it, following it through all its windings, crafty and patient and secret like a gentleman out killing tigers. Her soul—when no one else would give a look at her body even! … But you say: 'Come here, my bird! I will give you the dangerous black night to stretch your wings in, and poisonous berries to feed on, and a nest made of bones and thorns, perched high up in danger where no one can climb to it'. That's why we become witches: to show our scorn of pretending life's a safe business, to satisfy our passion for adventure. It's not malice, or wickedness—well, perhaps it *is* wickedness, for most women love that—but certainly not malice, not wanting to plague cattle and make horrid children spout up pins.[44]

Judging by this monologue, Laura appears to have retained her autonomy, in fact even gaining it through her very collusion with Satan. As she explains: 'One doesn't become a witch to run round being harmful, or to run round being helpful either, a district visitor on a broomstick. It's to escape all that—to have a life of one's own, not an existence doled out to you by others.'[45] Some ambivalence still remains, as she tells him: 'I like you so much, I find you so kind and sympathetic. But it is obvious that you can't be merely a benevolent institution. No, I must be your witch in blindness.' Her final conclusion, regardless, is that it is 'true, then, what she had read of the happy relationship between the Devil and his servants'.[46] The ending words of the novel also make clear that Lucifer is hardly a demanding god, but one who leaves his adherents at peace: 'A closer darkness upon her slumber, a deeper voice in the murmuring leaves overhead—that would be all she would know of his undesiring and unjudging gaze, his satisfied but profoundly indifferent ownership.'[47] This could be read as Satan being contrasted with God, the judging and dissatisfied entity who demands regular formal worship in churches, whereas Satan requests nothing of the sort and is part of nature, not of society and its repressive institutions. Satan's undesiring and unjudging gaze could also be seen as contrasted with the infamous male gaze, more specifically that of Titus surveying the landscape as well as his aunt.[48]

English literature scholar Smita Avashti points out how the novel reflects time-specific feminist concerns. After being granted the right to vote (in 1918, for women over thirty), the concerns of upper-class English women shifted from political representation to self-actualization. Both Virginia Woolf’s more famous book *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and Warner’s piece of Satanic fiction posit this struggle, for a space where one can fashion an individual identity, as their central issue.[49] Jane Marcus views the situation of feminism in England in the mid-1920s differently. According to her, novels like *Lolly Willowes* are a response to political disappointment in how little actually changed after the limited franchise for women in 1918 and all women subsequently getting the vote in 1928. She argues that realist fiction as a tool for propagating feminism was felt to be part of this failure to ‘make permanent space in the citadels of male power’, and fantastic themes thus functioned as ‘a retreat to the garden’ where feminists would ‘lick their wounds’.[50]

Whatever the state and mood of English feminism at the time, we can indeed clearly discern how the concerns of Warner’s novel are not primarily political change, but individual empowerment. If this reflects an enthusiastic next step following the successful accomplishment of the first one, or a retreat, after a saddening realization of the limits of that initial step, is a matter too complicated to judge, both with regards to Warner’s own personal opinions and the contemporary feminist milieu at large. The admittedly prominent individualistic focus is, however, complicated by Warner’s insistence on intertwined societal (patriarchal) structures being the ultimate cause of the lack of individual freedom for women. Although Laura in the end does not suggest any collectivist measures for coming to terms with this, but seems content with individual women having the possibility of being emancipated by the Devil, the basic analysis still revolves around structural oppression.

This is expressed, for example, in a long monologue, interspersed with some short questions from Satan (who this time appears dressed as a gardener), where Laura explains her thoughts on why the Devil is a saviour specifically of women and takes considerably less interest in men:[51]

> ‘I think you are a kind of black knight, wandering about and succouring decayed gentlewomen’
>
> ‘There are warlocks too, remember.’

> ‘I can’t take warlocks so seriously, not as a class. It is we witches who count. We have more need of you. Women have such vivid imaginations, and lead such dull lives. Their pleasure in life is so soon over; they are so dependent upon others, and their dependence so soon becomes a nuisance. … When I think of witches, I seem to see all over England, all over Europe, women living and growing old, as common as blackberries, and as unregarded.’[52]

Laura then mentions women going to listen to sermon in church: ‘Sin and Grace, and God and the — (she stopped herself just in time), and St. Paul. All men’s things, like politics, or mathematics. Nothing for them except subjection and plaiting their hair.’[53] Satan’s reaction more or less confirms he is indeed the deliverer from oppression that she views him as: ‘The Devil was silent, and looked thoughtfully at the ground. He seemed to be rather touched by all this.’[54]

This view of Satan, God’s great adversary, reflects Warner’s assessment of Christianity as a pivotal accomplice of patriarchal tyranny, a theme repeated with many variations throughout the narrative. Laura’s sister-in-law Caroline —a religious, conscientious, and pedantic housewife determined to keep her in-law marching just as dutifully in pace with patriarchal demands—holds up Christ as the example for keeping her linens in perfect orderliness: ‘The graveclothes were folded in the tomb,’ she solemnly states.[55] This scene belongs to a series of micro-level illustrations of the macro analyses that the novel presents in speeches such as that quoted. As we have seen, Warner twice lists the intertwined structures that tyrannize Laura and other women, both times identifying the church as a main culprit. Christianity comes under attack also in her reference to the Old Testament in this context, and in her just mentioned deriding of church sermons as part of patriarchal structures holding women in thrall.[56] Given such a view of things, Satan is in some ways a logical choice of liberating symbol. There is also another logic at work. As Avashti observes, Laura’s rejection of the traditional role for a witch—and her reconfiguration of herself as a self-defined version of the figure—is related to the novel’s overarching theme of forging an existence for oneself not in accordance with social scripts, but with one’s own wishes.[57] Repudiating the stereotypical Christian-patriarchal view of Satan then fits in with this counter-discursive project.[58]

Such an approach has all the same baffled some feminist scholars. For example, Jennifer Poulos Nesbitt asks: ‘Why should she make a pact with this masculine “Master” … when so much of the novel is about finding a space where female sexuality is free from male control?’[59] One explanation can

perhaps be found in Laura's family circumstances. Jane Garrity has highlighted that 'Warner suggests that it is precisely the absence of a maternal presence (Mrs Willowes dies early in the novel) that most emphatically enables Lolly to disregard the dictates of female conformity and pursue alternative interests'.[60] With the mother gone, her father raises her in a way that does not conform to the conventional socialization of a young woman (incidentally, it is hard not to notice parallels to the author's own biography here).[61] Women, as the example of Laura's sister-in-law shows, are instrumental in imposing the demands of patriarchy on other members of their sex. Satan emerges as a charitable and asexual paternal figure, who gives Laura the same completely free rein her father did. Not all men are bad, the novel seems to say, and some can even be allies in the fight against the broader oppressive structures of which patriarchy is a part. Another way of explaining this perceived discrepancy is to categorize Satan as non-masculine, a discussion to which we shall turn in a moment. First, however, we need to address the question of a possible lesbian subtext in the novel, which is a potential framework in which to set the feminization of the Devil.

A 'TINGLE FROM HEAD TO FOOT': LAURA'S LESBIAN DESIRES AND THE INVERSION OF THE GOTHIC

Several scholars have analysed *Lolly Willowes* as a tale of crypto-lesbianism, where "witch" is simply a substitute for "lesbian".[62] Laura's 'natural leaning towards the Devil', and being one of 'the people of Satan', are then to be perceived as veiled references to her sexual orientation.[63] There is only a single instance of semi-obvious allusion to this theme in the narrative. One night, Mrs Leak takes Laura to the witches' sabbath, which takes place in a large field where a crowd of people dance and talk in an 'air of disconnected jollity'. Even with her witch peers, Laura does not really enjoy this type of social function.[64] Except for one experience it offers, that is:

> [R]ed-haired Emily, who came spinning from her partner's arms, seized hold of Laura and carried her back into the dance. Laura liked dancing with Emily; the pasty-faced and anemic young slattern whom she had seen dawdling about the village. … A strand of red hair came undone and brushed across Laura's face. The contact made her tingle from head to foot.[65]

Nothing more comes of this, though. While I do find especially Jane Garrity's reading of the novel persuasive—I believe it does indeed hold, as she claims,

a homosexual subtext discernible at least for those who are attuned to looking for it—parts of her mustering of a huge mass of details to support her argument almost tend towards the paranoid in the insistence that seemingly everything points in this direction.[66] It is, in short, an overstating of an already quite convincing case.

Garrity emphasizes that *Lolly Willowes* was published at a time when obscenity laws were frequently used to censor themes such as lesbianism in literature.[67] Hiding it beneath an allegorical surface would thus have been a likely choice for a young and aspiring writer. Why witches, then? Garrity proposes there are clues to this choice in the historical context. For instance, Edward Carpenter had argued in *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution* (1914) that there was a long-standing link between homosexuality and witches, something that he views as a transcultural phenomenon.[68] This, aside from the work of Margaret Murray discussed later in her text, is the only example of this connection Garrity provides, which is somewhat unsatisfactory as evidence of a well-established cultural concept. Nonetheless, I believe she is definitely onto something. Another example that can be added is a French variation on the widespread motif of women bicyclists—at the time seen as one of the manifestations of a threatening female emancipation—as a modern version of the witch riding her broom, that was discussed in chapter 6. In this particular portrayal, one witch clutches the breasts of another, implying this is what goes on among suffragettes on tandem bikes as well (figure 11.2).[69] This is in accordance with how lesbianism was used as a means to stigmatize feminists, who would at times be accused of such sexual aberration by their ideological opponents.[70] Laura's vocal feminism towards the end of the novel could therefore perhaps be seen as a further connection to the motif of female homosexuality.

FIGURE 11.2 French caricature (ca. 1900) by Jean Veber (1864–1928) portraying female bicyclists (*lower right corner*) as a modern version of witches riding their broomstick to the sabbath (*top left*). Note how one witch clutches the breasts of the other, implying that the modern emancipated women also have homosexual tendencies.

As Garrity has thoroughly demonstrated, the characterizations of the villagers of Great Mop are replete with homosexual connotations.[71] For example, Laura thinks to herself, 'If they were different from other people, why shouldn't they be?'[72] The only man there with whom Laura has a close relationship is Mr Saunter, whom she is very fond of. However, their interaction has no romantic or sexual content at all. Garrity perceives him as feminized, since he is better than Laura at darning socks, and mothers his chicks like a henwife.[73] It may also be significant in this respect that the member of Laura's family who decides to move to the village is Titus, since

he, as Peter Swaab has remarked, displays many stereotypical effeminate homosexual traits: a soft voice, gentle ways, dainty affectations of speech, Grecianism, artsiness, and so on. He then leaves the village, or is banished from it, when he pairs up with a woman, which can be seen as a rejection of his earlier orientation and an embrace of heterosexuality.[74]

If we consider biographical data, Warner did not in fact become an active lesbian until 1930, and if we are to believe Wachman this came as a complete surprise to her. Before meeting Ackland she had, as mentioned earlier, a long relationship with a married older man.[75] While biography does not always unlock the most fruitful perspectives on texts, it is never a completely uninteresting factor either, though one should be careful not to use it as a corrective that dictates an "ultimate meaning". Suffice to say here that we can know little about whether Warner was aware of her bisexual disposition when she wrote *Lolly Willowes*. Even if she was not, it is fully possible she still found it appropriate to add the alienation of homosexuals in society as an additional subtext to her allegorical narrative, since she did have bisexual friends and thus probably sympathized with their difficult situation.[76]

From an intertextual perspective, we need to remember how earlier authors like Alfred de Musset, Baudelaire, Catulle Mendès, Renée Vivien, Marie Madeleine, Mary MacLane, and others had tied lesbianism to Satanism, while Jacques d'Adelswärd Fersen and Edward Carpenter had connected Satanism with male homosexuality in a manner approving of both. The presence of such a tradition could be seen as further support for the reading suggested by Garrity, Marcus, Swaab, and Bacon. There are also, perhaps, genre-related indications pointing in this direction. Terry Castle lists a series of early lesbian novels, among them Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) and Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), which oscillate between the realistic and the fantastic. In her opinion, this is a major feature of lesbian fiction, which almost invariably 'stylizes and estranges' even the most familiar things.[77] The fantastic elements in themselves, in a novel written by a woman at this particular time, could in other words to some extent themselves be seen as (admittedly extremely vague) indications of a hidden lesbian symbolism and may have been read thus by part of her audience. In connection to this, I believe it can be rewarding to briefly discuss another neglected intertext to *Lolly Willowes*, that of the Gothic novel.

While Smita Avashti has noted in passing that Warner's novel draws on the Gothic genre, she does not specify in what way or point out parallels to any

specific works.[78] Warner may have been familiar, directly or indirectly, with several of the Gothic texts that I discussed in chapter 5, in which Satan liberates women.[79] Many of her readers, at least, would have had some acquaintance with this type of literature. The demonic as tied to homosexuality is another more or less common motif in this genre. For example, in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, same-sex desire—or at least what seems like it at first (the young male with whom the titular character is infatuated turns out to be a woman, later revealed as a demon in disguise)—plays a major part. Although Warner's use of Satan draws on Gothic clichés about women being empowered by the Devil, it ultimately subverts them completely. Female emancipation—with demonic assistance or not—is portrayed negatively in novels like *The Monk* and William Beckford's *Vathek*, as highly ambivalent in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth*, and as ultimately leading to irredeemable evil in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*. Achieving agency and freedom with help from Satan in Gothic texts unambiguously tends to result in literal eternal torment in the fires of Hell, for men and women alike. As the reader may recall from chapter 5, it is common for Gothic fiction to explicitly replay the scene of temptation in Genesis 3, and the punishment for those who succumb to the Devil's allurement is generally at least as harsh as that which befell Eve (and Adam). This rule is adhered to in the work of a female Gothic author like Dacre as well. Warner inverts these tropes completely. In the final scene of the novel, Laura gives Satan an apple, thus reversing the Garden of Eden story. This is a concrete indication of the inversion of established notions concerning the relationship between the Devil and woman.[80] Very effectively, then, Warner constructs a counter-myth.

Avashti, Marcus, and Brothers all argue that the text has an inherent instability that makes it difficult to tell if Laura has simply invented her pact with Satan and the encounters with him, as well her own identity as a witch.[81] This is not really implied in the narrative, and should the witches' sabbath she attends with the rest of the village also be a hallucination she is indeed quite mad, something there is no support for in the text itself.[82] Rather, this reading seems to me like an easy way for bewildered scholars to approach the novel's discrepancy between realist style and fantastic elements. I would propose *Lolly Willowes* is better understood as a forerunner of the magic realism later developed by Latin American authors, and the down-to-earth and matter-of-fact manner in which the magical elements are described should be taken as

indications that they are here very much part of reality—not as proof of an overheated imagination or even insanity on Laura's part.[83]

Bruce Knoll draws a parallel between the function of the supernatural in *Lolly Willowes* and in the Gothic novel, where the supposed instability it introduces into the plot functions to challenge received ideas of both character and social relations. According to Knoll, Warner's use of this instability 'protests the pre-defined roles of men and women'.[84] Whether or not such an ontological hesitation is really present, Warner's use of Satan indeed serves exactly this function. Taking a figure usually embodying the ultimate evil and turning him into a benevolent entity should thus be read as part of a broader destabilizing and questioning revisionary project.[85] This destabilization is also relevant to understanding Satan's gender identity and sexual orientation in the novel, questions we shall now address.

'OUT OF HER GRASP': SATAN, THE QUEER AND EFFEMINATE GOD OF NATURE

Garrity reads Satan in the novel as 'a feminized figure, a homosexual signifier', with the protagonist's attraction to this 'transgendered man' to be seen as 'further evidence of her repressed lesbian identification'.[86] Her major example of this is the "Satan" Laura encounters at the witches' sabbath. The figure at the sabbath wears a mask, which is 'like the face of a very young girl', has a 'girlish throat' and minces 'like a girl'. However, when the figure, '[w]ith a fine tongue like a serpent's' licks Laura's right cheek, she becomes furious.[87] She walks away from the sabbath and soon realizes the man behind the mask was a mere impostor, not the Devil. The real Satan later explains that the man is a young author who has sold his soul for social success.[88] In her 1995 analysis of the novel, Garrity simply ignores this last fact, while she in 2003 tries to explain why it is meaningful to try to understand the real Satan by looking at the impostor. Her argument is that the scene is connected with an overarching theme in novel, where the text 'adheres not to any single *truth* about identity, but rather demonstrates the way in which it is created through a performative process of disguise and disclosure'.[89] I am willing to concede that one possible way of reading the scene with the girlish masked man is that it is intended to illustrate how gender as such is purely performative (to speak with Judith Butler), the mask being a fairly likely signifier of such an endeavour. Yet, since it is stated very clearly in the novel that the figure at the

sabbath is not Satan himself, I find Garrity's approach overtly disrespectful of the internal logic and actual wordings of the text. She here clearly disregards explicit and clear statements to the contrary—the figure at the sabbath is emphatically said not to be Satan—in order to make her interpretation fit. The real point, aside from perhaps making a statement about the performativity of gender, seems to me to be that the young author is effeminate and probably has uranian inclinations (to use a term current at the time). In other words, this is another indication of the Satanist village of Great Mop as an allegory for a homosexual community.

The basic idea of Satan as feminized is something I do still agree with, though I think this particular scene should not be used as support for it. We can instead, for example, note how Laura says Satan has been keeping his eyes on her for nine months in Great Mop before sending his cat messenger to make the pact with her.[90] He can thus be seen as a motherly figure symbolically giving birth to Laura's new emancipated witch persona. Being a manifestation of nature, he is also to some extent coded as feminine, in accordance with the time-honoured view of nature as feminine, in contrast to masculine culture. Civilization in itself, at least in its modern form, is presented as intrinsically bound up with the patriarchal power structure. The Devil, as a symbol of nature, emerges as the adversary of the masculine social order that God and the Church are part of, and is hence feminized, as Bruce Knoll has noted.[91] It follows that if God is a pillar of the masculine social order it is fully cogent to present Satan as an ally of both woman, who is supposed to be closer to nature (another stereotype), and of those wishing to rebel against social norms. Satan as a benevolent god of nature was additionally a well-known literary trope. We encounter him, for example, in Michelet's *La Sorcière* and Noble Prize winner Giosuè Carducci's *Inno a satana* (1865).[92] The conflation of Satan with a romanticized version of the Greek god Pan (perceived as a god of nature), which was frequent in literature as well as esotericism at the time, is another example of how strong this association was.[93] Pan, we should also remember, was a prominent symbol in homoerotic nineteenth-century texts.[94]

An instability in gender identity is further logically very much part of Satan's general fluidity in the novel. For example, Laura says to him, 'You're beyond me, my thought flies off you like the centrifugal hypothesis', signalling she is unable to pin him down.[95] She may think for a moment that she has him figured out, but before she knows it he has 'tricked himself out of her grasp'.[96]

This refers not simply to the general incomprehensibility of a supernatural and powerful entity, but to something more specific to Satan: fluidity and hybridity has, as demonstrated by media studies scholar Ilkka Mäyrä, traditionally been a central trait of the demonic in theological as well as popular discourse.[97] This is reflected in the prevalence of Satan as a feminized figure in various nineteenth-century discourses, as discussed throughout the present study. As we have seen, the idea was considerably older, with a transgendered Prince of Darkness with drooping breasts figuring in many Christian depictions, for instance, in church frescos as early as the 1100s and in fifteenth-century tarot decks. In literature, Cazotte's female Lucifer in the 1772 *Le Diable amoureux* is probably the prime example.[98] During the following century, we have Éliphas Lévi's hermaphrodite Baphomet (whom he sees as a form of Satan), Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Satan with a vulva-tipped penis, Theosophist Gerald Massey's Lady Lucifer, and so on. Although the hints are subtler in *Lolly Willowes*, it could be argued the very presence in European culture of such notions about the Devil's gender in themselves shift the figure in Warner's novel away from the purely masculine.

Barbara Brothers underscores how Laura's perception of Satan challenges literary and social conventions (but she here ignores the long tradition of literary Satanism, seemingly assuming a monolithical "literature" has produced an equally monolithical negative view of Satan) as well as 'the designation of Satan as a masculine character'. Since he listens attentively to Laura's long monologues, his 'is not a masculine posture' and his 'maleness is an attribute ascribed by the myth Warner attacks rather than of the character she presents'. Brothers calmingly asserts, 'Satan's gender then should not trouble feminists.'[99] Following the reasons proposed by Brothers, Catherine M. Bacon also sees the Devil as ambiguously gendered. She further reads his asexual romance with Laura as queer (in the modern gender studies sense of the word), since it denies contemporary categories of sexuality, 'modernity's insistence on heteronormative sexual satisfaction and reproduction'.[100] Whether Satan's way of listening is by definition non-masculine could perhaps be discussed, as could the supposed queerness of asexuality. However, a feminization of Satan is perceivable, as we have seen, not only in the sense proposed by Brothers and Bacon but also intertextually via the cultural tradition—where Satan is aligned with the feminine—with which I believe Warner should be read as being engaged in more or less intentional conversation.

FEMINISM AND THE DEVIL: WARNER AS THE EPITOME OF A SATANIC FEMINIST TRADITION

As readers with a good memory will recall from previous chapters, there are numerous earlier depictions of Satan comparable to Warner's. This is not something other studies of her novel tend to acknowledge, however. Avashti claims the image of the pact with Satan presented by Warner stands in opposition to contemporary descriptions of it, an assertion she bases on a single comparative example, published four years after Warner wrote her novel, George Lyman Kittredge's *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (1928).[101] While it may very well stand in opposition to established views of the diabolic pact, the interpretation of Satan as a liberator that it presents is in fact in complete unison with a literary tradition stretching all the way back to the Romantics. It was also very much alive in Warner's own time, for example, in Aleister Crowley's 'Hymn to Lucifer' (ca. 1920) and the Satanist poems D. H. Lawrence wrote a couple of years after *Lolly Willowes*.[102] Another example is Anatole France's *La Révolte des anges* ('The Revolt of the Angels', 1914). Regarding France's novel, it is interesting to note that Satan there, just like in *Lolly Willowes*, propagates a sort of individualistic "inner" resistance instead of external revolution (see chapter 3).

It is peculiar that almost every single scholar who has written about the novel treats its benevolent Satan as if he had been invented in a cultural vacuum. This is absolutely not the case. We can safely assume Warner was acquainted with the writings of Byron, Shelley, and Blake, where Satan is lauded as a symbol of liberation.[103] It is also worth noting that between 1918 and 1920 Warner set poems by Walt Whitman to music, and the American poet had portrayed Satan as a freedom fighter in his famous 'Chanting the Square Deific' (1881–82).[104] Such a view of the figure was also taken, for example, in George Sand's *Consuelo* (1842–43), to mention but one of a vast number of examples of literary Satanism that Warner may have read.[105]

Another intertext that may be important is the socialist use of Satan as a symbol of freedom and justified rebellion, detailed in chapter 3, which Warner might have been aware of. She became a member of the British Communist Party only in 1935, but some familiarity with such texts at an earlier date seems reasonable.[106] Already in 1924 she was composing poems about Rosa Luxemburg, and her friend Arnold Rattenbury describes her "conversion" to communism as anything but sudden.[107] Before or during the

writing of *Lolly Willowes*, she could well have come across the positive references to Satan by ideologists like Proudhon, Bakunin, or the American anarchists who named their newspaper (1883–1907) *Lucifer*.[108] Granted, this is conjecture. That she would have read some of the works of English Romantic literary Satanism is a more certain assumption. It is rather surprising that no one has suggested something so obvious as an influence on her positive understanding of the Devil.[109] These intertexts must also be considered important for how at least a portion of her readers likely understood *Lolly Willowes*. This novel, after all, conformed to the conventions of a vaguely outlined tradition that many were familiar with to some degree.

As we have seen in previous chapters, there was also a tradition of linking feminism to the Devil, both among its adherents and its enemies. I would argue Warner's use of the figure is better comprehended if viewed in connection with texts like *The Story of Mary MacLane*, Percy Shelley's Satanic feminism in *The Revolt of Islam*, Vivien's paeans to Satan as the god of femininity and lesbianism, Theosophical feminists' use of the Blavatskian counter-reading of Genesis 3 as a tool for suffrage agitation, the Socratic Satan of *The Woman's Bible*, or indeed the diabolical antics of the free-spirited Marchesa Casati (whose fashion sense would certainly have greatly amused Warner), which were widely reported in the ladies' magazines of the time. Another case in point is the popular surveys of the historical development of the Devil figure that would sometimes note how God seemed to be a misogynist and Satan thus logically an ally of womankind.[110] As for the specific allegorical role of witches, it can be seen in light of Michelet's *La Sorcière*, Gage's *Woman, Church and State*, Leland's *Aradia*, Egerton's hugely famous short story 'A Cross Line', and so on. There is, of course, also the tradition of Demonized feminism to consider, where feminism was associated with witches as well as the Devil in a manner utterly opposed to all these things.

I have seen no scholar note the fact that Warner is a contributor to a pre-existing discourse where witchcraft and Satanism are used to portray female emancipation. While her novel is extraordinarily explicit and articulate when it comes to making Satan a liberator of women, it is not as unique as one might think. Warner's text could be considered a reply to the literal demonization of feminists, as in the example of Woodhull or the female bicyclists, inverting it and claiming Satan and witches as positive symbols of feminist resistance. It

is not only a protest, however, but also a continuation of the favourable use of the witch figure and her rebel god seen in Egerton, Vivien, Gage, and others. None of these intertextual connections are necessarily direct. It is impossible to demonstrate Warner's familiarity with most of them conclusively, though the circumstantial evidence is strong. They can just as well have influenced her simply as vague notions floating around in her intellectual environment, which is still significant and worth taking into account.[111] All the above-mentioned texts may thus have guided Warner in an indirect manner and would further have made her theme seem somehow recognizable and logical to many readers.

'I WISH I WERE IN HER COVEN': LUNCH WITH MARGARET MURRAY AND 'WITCHY GLAMOUR'

One of Warner's self-admitted sources for *Lolly Willowes* was Margaret Murray's *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (1921).[112] Murray was a respected Egyptologist, though (like most women of her generation) she in fact lacked formal academic training. Herein we may perhaps partly find the explanation for her unsound methodology when tackling a completely different field, that of European Early Modern witchcraft trials. This reorientation in her research was brought about by the temporary suspension of Egyptology during World War I. Her wild ideas, first presented in the journal *Folklore* in 1917 and subsequently in the form of the above-mentioned book published by Oxford University Press, were immediately torn to pieces by historians. Nonetheless, they proved to have immense popular appeal. Jacqueline Simpson has suggested several reasons for this. One of them is that Murray managed to find an enticing middle ground between the religious extremists, who still viewed witches as Satanists with miraculous powers granted to them by the Devil, and the typical sceptical academic, who saw them as totally innocent victims. Murray's explanation was that witches represented a non-supernatural counterculture that kept paganism alive in secret and practised fertility rites.[113] The latter, of course, was very much in tune with the theories of Sir James George Frazer, whose *Golden Bough* (1890, enlarged edition 1907–1915) had, as Norman Cohn puts it, 'launched a cult of fertility cults'.[114] The alleged Satanism of the witch-cult was, Murray explained, a misunderstanding, and the horned god they worshipped was a pagan entity, Janus/Dianus. Satanism or no Satanism, witches were still up to

some very wicked things, according to Murray, such as occasionally sacrificing children and desecrating the graves of infants in order to eat their flesh.[115] Whereas earlier influential and equally fanciful accounts of witchcraft by scholars, like Michelet's *La Sorcière*, had sometimes posited ultimately political incentives for the secretive sect, this was absent in *The Witch-cult*. If the witches were proto-socialist freedom fighters to Michelet, they were primarily peasants with peasants' concerns about crops and livestock to Murray.

Warner had read Murray's book when it appeared and sent her a copy of her own debut novel shortly after its publication.[116] Soon afterward they met for lunch, and Warner attested to the Egyptologist's charisma in a letter: 'I wish I were in her coven, perhaps I shall be.' While Murray liked her witch, she was, unsurprisingly, more hesitant towards Warner's portrayal of the Devil.[117] A close friend of Warner's, David Garnett, held up the two works as complementary: 'while Miss Murray has given us the facts, Miss Townsend Warner is the first woman to reveal the spiritual side of the witch-cult'.[118] Although Warner clearly shared Murray's enthusiasm for the witch figure, had read her account of it, and was later captivated by her in person, Avashti somewhat overstates the similarities between the two books, claiming they share a 'desire to debunk false accounts of witchcraft'.[119] Rather than attempting to present a "true" account I would say Warner offers a feminist counter-reading—where Satan becomes a saviour and witches figures of freedom—as a means to disrupt the patriarchal Christian meta-narrative in which woman's intimacy with Satan in the Garden of Eden and later as a witch has been used to delegitimize and disempower her.

Similar to Avashti, Bacon views Warner's Satan as derived more or less directly from Murray, claiming he 'shares more with Murray's Dianic deity … than with the fallen angel of Christian mythology'.[120] While there is some truth to this (especially in the stressing of the witches' deity as a god of nature), the continuity with Romantic Satanism still seems considerably more important. This applies especially since the motif of Satan as a liberator—the central one here—is not even present in Murray's book. There are also several other prominent deviations from Murray's views, for example, in Laura's asexual relation to the Devil, which is quite unlike the sexual fertility rites Murray posited as the core of the witch-cult.[121] Garrity suggests that Murray, in stressing witchcraft as a form of nature worship and the original religion of the British Isles, was important to Warner's construction of Laura the lesbian

as intimately tied to rural England, the seat of national identity. This can be seen as an attempt to naturalize lesbianism and bestow entitlement to the nation upon this minority.[122] As Garrity herself points out, however, Murray had not attempted to politicize the witch as a feminist agent, nor, one can add, as an icon of lesbian rights.[123] As a whole, the dissimilarities between Murray's and Warner's witches almost seem more tangible than the resemblances. This being said, a lecture on witches that Warner gave in March 1927 appears to have been inspired quite directly by Murray's views. One of the attendees describes how she 'told us how the witches were really convinced the devil was a god, but they did not know he was indeed the old Fertility God … . And no wonder Christianity was shocked by a religion so old and unascetic … [she] described how witches had the joy of really letting themselves go in their Sabbaths without a sense of sin.'[124]

David Carroll Simon writes that *Lolly Willowes* 'exuded an aura of witchy glamour that sparked rumours about the author's relationship with black magic'.[125] However, not only the book itself was responsible for this. Perhaps as an expression of her wry sense of humour, Warner happily played up to interviewers' recurring speculations that she herself was perhaps a witch (more on this later). She said similar things in private conversations. When Virginia Woolf asked her how she knew so much about witches, she replied, 'Because I am one'.[126] Such tongue-in-cheek statements should likely be understood in the light of, for example, Ackland's description of her partner's irreverent view of religion: 'She has a positive horror of any form of religion, which she believes to be immeasurably dangerous and destructive.'[127] Jokingly declaring herself a witch could then be a light-hearted way of displaying a specifically feminine symbolic resistance to religion (Christianity), but was certainly not anything along the lines of Gerald Gardner's attempt to literally "revive" witchcraft a couple of decades later. Granted, Warner had been fascinated by witchcraft since childhood, when she repeated spells to her cat, 'feeling a black hope they would work', and had persuaded the family's cook to perform the cauldron scene from *Macbeth* with her in the kitchen. Such incidents, however, of course do not amount to a genuine believing interest in practical spell-casting and diabolism.[128] In view of similar anecdotes from her adulthood, it could all the same be argued that her negative opinion of religion did not extend to magic and the supernatural, but was limited to organized religion. A revealing story here is how her friend Joy Finzi, during a period when Ackland was ill,

> told her of the Oxford witches who had helped Gerald [Joy's husband, composer Gerald Finzi] through his operations. Sylvia was intrigued, but dared not mention it to Valentine, for fear of a rebuff, so Joy broached the subject herself and left the house with a drop of blood, ready to put Valentine 'on the box'. Valentine's well being came and went pretty much as usual, but the black box certainly comforted Sylvia, who believed in it quite irrationally, as was fitting.[129]

'MISS WARNER MUST CLEARLY BE A WITCH HERSELF': THE RECEPTION OF *LOLLY WILLOWES*

Lolly Willowes did very well commercially. It was reprinted twice in one week in the United Kingdom and sold over 10,000 copies in the United States in only a few months.[130] Warner became a minor celebrity in both countries, functioning as guest editor of the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1929 and having the manuscript of *Lolly Willowes* on display at the New York Public Library alongside handwritten texts by Thackeray and Woolf as late as 1965.[131] Despite worries expressed by one selection committee member that it was 'too literary', her debut novel also became the first ever pick for the soon-to-be influential American Book-of-the-Month Club in 1926. The subscribers, it turned out, were quite displeased by this slightly bizarre English import.[132] It was, nonetheless, reprinted many times on both sides of the Atlantic, for example, by Penguin in 1937. There were also translations into German, French, and Italian. Given the novel's great popularity in its time, as well as the numerous editions it has subsequently gone through, it has received astonishingly little scholarly attention.[133] Those in academia who have studied it, however, tend to consider it a very important work, for example, hailing it as 'a feminist manifesto deserving a place in the curriculum no less than Virginia Woolf's texts'.[134]

Surprisingly, for a novel that presents one of the most explicit literary arguments ever for Satan as a liberator of women, *Lolly Willowes* was met with overwhelming critical praise on its initial publication. The Chatto & Windus scrapbook, presently part of the University of Reading special collection, contains ninety-six clippings published in newspapers in 1926, which review, discuss, or otherwise mention *Lolly Willowes* (including brief interviews with Warner).[135] The vast majority celebrate it as a masterpiece, or, at the very least, as a highly promising debut, mostly focusing on the brilliance of style, gentle beauty, and pleasant wit of the book. Among the remarkably few who were not completely infatuated with the novel, the *Yorkshire Post* accused Warner of being 'obscure', while the *Daily Herald*

opined that this 'much-talked-of story is a regrettable example of the most decadent style in fashionable literature'.[136] Some reviewers, although they liked the book as a whole, were baffled by the Satanic pact. 'But why', one of them asked, 'should Lolly find it necessary to ally herself with the forces of evil because she is tired of being an aunt?'[137] American weekly *The Outlook* declared its ignorance concerning if Warner 'is herself a witch or merely a student of demonology', but was critical of the author's description of 'diabolism as gentle, nay genteel, fun' and voiced concern 'lest frivolous maidens should be persuaded by her roseate picture of the Forbidden Covenant to sign their names too readily to a Damned Indenture'.[138] *The Saturday Review* thought that 'the devil business is too violent a figure to nourish the truth Miss Warner means to convey'.[139]

However, most reviewers, probably desensitized by more than a century of literary Satanism, took no particular issue with the positive portrait of Satan. This could also have something to do with the pleasantly whimsical tone of this quaintly English tale, which perhaps made its Satanism seem little more than a harmless (if offbeat) jest. The deceptively simple and musical language could also be a factor. David Carroll Simon has aptly characterized the novel's prose as 'disappearing like a gulp of cold water down your throat: you swallow gratefully, but without careful reflection on the contents of the draught'.[140] But many had no problem with the content even when thinking more closely about it. The *Manchester Guardian* pointed out that, at least according to the internal logic of the tale itself, in making a pact with Satan 'Aunt Lolly was, indeed, perfectly right to take this unusual line'.[141] Cambridge lecturer I. A. Richards, writing in *The Forum*, thought Satan was here 'approached with a delicate and refreshing sympathy and a complete freedom from all melodramatic trappings'.[142] Sympathy for the Devil, then, could be deemed a literary strength rather than something problematic by mid-1920s critics. In the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, the reviewer remarked on Satan's 'charming manners' and his 'dignity of a sympathetic archangel', adding that '[w]e always suspected Lucifer to be like this, and not the cloven hoofed devil that other authors have imagined him'. Jokingly, the enthusiastic critic then adds: 'Miss Warner must clearly be a witch herself to describe him so well.'[143]

This conflating of the author with her witchy heroine was quite regular. It is to be found outside of actual reviews as well. Aside from newspaper pieces,

the Chatto & Windus scrapbook contains typewritten statements from American author Carl van Vechten and David Garnett, presumably blurb and advertising material. The former praised the 'combination of [Warner's] curiously sure humour and an esoteric mystic paganism', while the latter stated that now, '[f]or the first time the reader can understand the spiritual force which drove thousands of women into the witches covens'. Garnett further remarked that *Lolly Willowes* is even so 'much more than the ordinary prosetysising [*sic*] novel'. Jokingly, he then added that Warner herself 'is not, so far as I know, a witch', and predicted that the book 'will be well reviewed; —no one would willingly risk having a waxen image of himself held by Miss Townsend Warner in front of a slow fire'.[144] Warner herself certainly played a part in self-ironically blending her own public persona with that of the witch. In an interview with the *Western Wales Gazette*—published 6 June 1926, when the novel had gone through several editions already and was a huge success—she declared 'that her much discussed book, *Lolly Willowes*, was meant seriously and that she believes in witches'. The journalist then added, 'I'm not at all sure that she doesn't believe she's a witch herself!'[145] A brief notice in the *Daily Mirror*, from 13 July 1926, states that Warner, 'the author of a remarkable book, *Lolly Willowes*, now announces that she is a witch!'[146] Subsequently, on 4 and 5 August, a direct statement of hers to this effect was reported in two articles.[147] In a sense, we can see Warner as yet another exponent of the tactic of assuming the role of the demonic woman, discussed in chapter 9.

A writer for the *Newcastle Daily Journal* divulged in June 1926 that he had 'had numerous conversations with Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner lately on the subject of witchcraft. It is a fascinating subject, and one in which she is widely versed.' He then quotes Warner saying that witchcraft is still alive in England: 'The world in general seems to think that witchcraft has died out; but it hasn't, as everyone who has lived in the country, particularly the West Country, knows.' Her final words in the brief piece proclaim about witchcraft that 'its powers can be applied to the most modern ways of life, in town or country'.[148] Elsewhere, she asserted: 'Every modern woman who has a talent for real witchcraft … should be a witch. By witchcraft I mean the actual practice of witchcraft, for which there is an immense craving. I expect to see a great revival of it.'[149] Warner humorously expanded on this last notion in an article she wrote for *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial* in August 1926. It was titled 'Modern Witches', and Warner explains to the reader that she thinks 'there is

a great deal of pleasure to be found by women who revive the old art of witchcraft'. However, as already mentioned, this is far from an *avant la lettre* version of Gerald Gardner's Wicca, as Warner's tone is flippant in the extreme. 'The traditional witch', she explains, 'went to the witches' sabbath through the air on a broomstick. The modern witch will go on a vacuum-cleaner.' The suitability of sorcery for modern, urban use is emphasized here too:

> There is nothing in witchcraft to make it in the least unsuitable for Ealing or Mayfair. It has many advantages: it is easy, it is cheap, it isn't obtrusive. Without any regular monthly payments, or exercises before breakfast, or installing large patent machines, or undergoing special diet, a witch can do what she wants, and have what she wants.[150]

The desires thus fulfilled are not at all related to the radical freedom witchcraft symbolizes in *Lolly Willowes*, however. Rather, the witches are the women who 'grow the largest sweet peas, they have the neatest sandwiches, their complexions are so permanent, their backs of their necks are so small, their children always have measles at school and never at home, and everyone enjoys their dinner parties'. It is possible that Warner here gently mocks the petty concerns to which most women's abilities have been directed in a patriarchal society. In the article, Warner also tells of how her own interest in witchcraft was aroused when, around the age of ten, she read the book *Mackay's Popular Delusions*. Here she found various 'spells and invocations for calling up the Devil', though she 'could not understand much of them, because they were in Latin and other foreign languages'. This did not keep her from learning them by heart and repeating them to her cat, but with little success in spite of her belief that 'he might very well have been the Devil in disguise' (figure 11.3). If this were so, 'either he didn't understand the spells because I didn't pronounce them properly, or else he didn't choose to reveal himself just then'.[151] Warner further relates how she eventually discovered she was after all a witch, and of what great use this has been to her:

> in order to oblige a friend, I made a waxen image of her aunt, for all I could hear of it, a loathsome woman. I made it out of a candle-end, and stuck it full of black pins, and set it before the fire to melt, which it did, making a most horrible mess, and causing a great deal of inconvenience to the housemaid who had to scrape it up. The housemaid was not the only person it inconvenienced. Two days after the image melted, my friend heard that her aunt had been suddenly, mysteriously, inexplicably smitten down with a feverish chill which nobody could account for. A little embarrassed, but on the whole pleased, I discovered that I was a witch, and without making a fuss about it, I suppose I have been one ever since. I find it particularly useful on railway journeys. Even on bank holidays, I can always get a corner seat to myself, and people whom I don't like the look of, if they

are in the carriage already when I get in, they get out. Or if they come into the carriage which I am in already, they leave it at the next station. This, in itself, should be enough to convince the reader that witchcraft is a great aid in modern conditions.[152]

FIGURE 11.3 Illustration of Sylvia Townsend Warner as a child, studying a book on witchcraft. From her article 'Modern Witches' in *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial*, 18 August 1926.

In spite of making uninhibited fun of the figure of the witch in this article, and not giving the figure any feminist slant in this context, Warner clearly had earnest political intentions when she wrote her novel. Before the publication of *Lolly Willowes*, she complained in a letter to David Garnett that friends and family members who had read the manuscript had told her it was 'charming',

'distinguished', and so on (which is pretty much the same reaction subsequently evinced by most critics), making her feel 'as though I had tried to make a sword, only to be told what a pretty pattern there was on the blade'.[153] Up until the feminist 'discovery' of the text in the late 1970s, it seems quite a few readers did not notice the sword because of the delightful pattern adorning it. Comparisons in the initial American reviews, for example, were mostly to Jane Austen.[154] Christopher Morley, of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, was one of those who claimed this supposed parallel, but he also stressed that 'readers who are up to it will perceive the deeper darkness inside her quiet fable'.[155] Other American critics displayed a clear awareness of the feminist dimensions of the text, with, for example, the *New York Herald Tribune* highlighting how Laura deemed warlocks, in contrast with witches, to be of little importance in the world of witchcraft, since '[a] man could do what he wanted anyhow'.[156] I. A. Richards of *The Forum* thought that 'the only weak paragraphs in it are those of Laura's feminist speech towards the end'.[157] This objection, however, was not raised because he had issues with feminism, but rather because he felt the book as a whole did not tackle topics relevant to contemporary times to a sufficient extent to make it feel truly relevant. His grievance was over too little and too late, rather than being caused by any anti-feminist sentiments.

In Britain, *G. K.'s Weekly* assured the reader that although Laura 'had no desire to be a wife … she was no Feminist'.[158] Presumably, this meant the reviewer believed the book itself was not preoccupied with feminist issues either. Far from everyone perceived it this way, however, particularly not those especially attuned to such matters. London-based suffrage periodical *Woman's Leader*, for example, held that one of the important aspects of the book was that it constituted 'an essay on the woman question'.[159] The *Daily News* suggested the novel could be understood as 'a symbolic summary of the unrest which all women feel when they find their houses closing in on them and their individualities hidden under the labels of wife or mother or—as in this case—aunt'. This review also clearly picked up on the radical implications of some of the novels' statements, laying down that '[t]his book is no mere delicate, delicious trifle; it is a declaration of war against Ratepayerdom'.[160] A South African critic made an astute analysis in the *Cape News* of the tale as an allegorical narrative intended to make political points about the situation of women:

> Why should Lolly's late-found independence be linked with Satan? Apparently because it means to her a charming, innocent idleness and a disregard of the conventional claims and routine 'duties' of life. One rather suspects at the least that the arch-rebel has been introduced because Miss Warner has been longing to impart to the world some interesting thoughts on women, and knows very well that an essay reaches only a select few, while thousands will devour eagerly this vivid tale.[161]

The basic statement here is that literature is used as a tool by Warner to convey feminist beliefs, and that Satanism is chosen as a vehicle for this ideological content because the Devil is such a colourful and attention-grabbing symbol. Although several reviewers saw that the book dealt somehow with the 'woman question', none made specific mention of Laura's accusation that Christianity was an integral part of the broader patriarchal societal structure that was the ultimate source of all her misery (and that of women in general). Quite a few remarked on the novel's connecting of witchcraft and female emancipation. The most commonly quoted phrase from the book in reviews was in fact Laura's description of witchcraft as a means 'to have a life of one's own, not an existence doled out to you by others'.[162] The *Evening Standard* ended its review with the following observation: 'If the author of this clever little book had been even more explicit about exactly how to become a witch, a good many women might be tempted—for Miss Laura Willowes' reasons—to try it: as a means of escape.'[163] The critic for *Country Life* similarly remarked: 'If I were the Devil I should be disappointed if the recruits to witchcraft made for me by *Lolly Willowes* were not numerous and distinguished.' The same review also underlines how 'gentlemanly and charming' Warner's Satan is, and that it seems he does not intend 'to make the conventionally unpleasant use' of Laura's soul. Witchcraft, the novel makes the writer feel, comes across as 'about the best thing that a widow or spinster lady of small means, unsocial habits and a love of the open air can possibly go in for'.[164] Following the same line of analysis, the *Bolton Evening News* reviewed it under the headline 'An Apology for Witchcraft'.[165] One critic was even able to explicitly identify the novel as standing in a direct tradition of Satanic feminism: the *Birmingham Post* remarked that it 'rather suggests Michelet's *La Sorcière* viewed through the wrong end of the telescope—which is to pay the author no ill compliment'.[166]

On a final note, it is interesting to see that several reviewers were keen to hold the tale up as depicting nothing but the hallucinations and madness of Laura. The *Spectator*, for example, proclaimed that 'Miss Willowes, the good creature, was probably a little wrong in the head'.[167] This effectively

delegitimizes the counter-myth dimension of the narrative and makes it less threatening as an alternative (which it constituted, albeit in a fictional and humorous manner) to Christian mythology. In fact, there is little ambiguity in this regard in the text. Warner herself was completely clear on the issue and stated to a reporter: 'Dozens of people have written to me asking whether I meant that she [Laura] became a witch only symbolically. … I meant quite literally that she became a witch.'[168]

CONCLUDING WORDS

Sylvia Townsend Warner was educated by an atheist father of great learning and was intimately acquainted with the Bible from an early age. The critical perspective on the Holy Writ that she partook of at home would later be reflected in her debut novel, which actively subverts biblical motifs. In her teens she started to wear outrageous outfits, and *Lolly Willowes* can be seen as a textual extension of this predilection for the strange in combination with her unorthodox, or even hostile, view of Christianity. However, the novel's strangeness is covered in so many layers of witticisms and hilarity that it comes across mostly as the kind of mild, eccentric whimsy towards which the English have always been tolerant. Warner's taste in bizarre dress and accessories is yet another example of the quirkiness that is a recurring trait in the authors that employed a Satanic symbolism. This is hardly surprising, since using Satan as a positive symbol is so outré in itself that it is only to be expected that those who did so would be equally brazen and flamboyant in other respects. It is nonetheless significant, as it lets us understand that Satanism was part of a broader expression of a status as cultural outsider (but not necessarily an extremely radical outsider status). It was also probably perceived thus by most readers, given the frequently public performance of eccentricity the authors put on (Warner's playfully offbeat claims to being a witch herself in interviews and private conversations being a case in point).

The heroine of the novel is dissatisfied with the restrictions put on her because she is a girl, which entail that she can no longer climb trees and run wild after a certain age, but must be integrated into society as a woman—a category she soon discovers functions almost as a prison of sorts. Passing from her father's household to her brother's, her freedom is severely circumscribed and she is expected to perform a multitude of womanly household duties. She refuses the attempts to marry her off, however, and

finally breaks free by moving to a small village and immersing herself in nature. The Satan who comes to her aid in preserving this utopian condition is characterized by her as an emancipator of women, a figure who cares especially about the spinsters that are so useless to patriarchy. Warner lets her protagonist point out how society, the legal system, and the church are all intertwined aspects of the same oppressive patriarchal structure. Even her sister-in-law's pedantic fixation with well-folded linens is framed as directly connected to ideals of Christian piety. Christian civilization, therefore, is the confinement Laura must escape from, and the refuge is the Devil's church, nature itself, where this gentle figure offers freedom from the aforementioned system. Reflecting moods in the British feminism of the time, this is hardly a collectivist solution to the problems women face. The narrative instead depicts the attainment of individual emancipation, 'a life of one's own' in an almost solipsistic sense. Laura does not attempt to change society, but turns away from it. In place of acting as a feminist revolutionary, then, Satan represents a refuge for women from patriarchy's demands. Much like the Satan of Anatole France, he suggests an inner rebellion of the soul is more effective and beneficial for the individual. Contemporary critics were not always impressed by this and could reprimand Warner for her lack of activist tendencies. Especially considering Laura's concluding speech, it is clear that this is a feminist manifesto of sorts, if not of the most conventional variety. Indeed, some feminists at the time praised it as an insightful contribution to the debate concerning contemporary woman's situation.

It is possible to read a lesbian subtext into the novel, and there is one scene where this theme comes to the surface quite explicitly. This can be seen as one of several examples of how Warner was fully in tune with the established tradition of Satanic feminism. Satan himself is distinctly asexual, and we are hence a long way from the sensual demon lovers of Gothic fiction or MacLane's diaries, and equally far from Margaret Murray's fertility cult. Yet, this Devil too encourages a sensual attitude towards the world, which is contrasted with a petite bourgeoisie Christian asceticism (as expressed in the disapproval of Laura's brother's family when she buys luxurious flowers for her room).[169] *Lolly Willowes* is quite consistently a counter-narrative, where a series of central cultural values are spurned. As in the other pieces of Satanic feminism we have considered, this is accomplished by using Satan as the central symbol and involves topsy-turvy reimaginings of biblical narratives. For example, when the Devil appears as a gardener, Laura initially does not

recognize him. This parodies how Mary Magdalen at first mistakes the resurrected Christ for the gardener.[170] When Laura offers Satan an apple, which he happily accepts, it is a neat reversal of Genesis 3. The incident traditionally used to motivate the subjugation of women now becomes a display of her power and agency in relation to a masculine figure, the tender and kindly Satan.

Literature can be a powerfully transformative force. A bestseller like Warner's, with a clear ideological stance, can safely be assumed to have caused changes in at least some of its readers, even if we do not have any drastic testimonies of the sort that the case of Mary MacLane offers. The use of Satan as a symbol of (feminist) resistance by both authors should be considered an especially strong expression of a broader critique of Christianity that was present in the feminist discourse of the time. As in *The Story of Mary MacLane*, undomesticated nature is the kingdom of Satan and therefore a sanctuary from the patriarchal pressures of domestic, civilized life. Warner's Satan also shares the Socratic function of MacLane's version of him, as he plays the passive part in their conversations and lets Laura present long monologues on the state of things, especially the oppression of women. The number of parallels between MacLane and Warner is striking, but seemingly has nothing to do with a straight genealogy. Instead, they draw on the same reservoir of ideas concerning Satan as a deliverer of the downtrodden. When these notions are applied to the question of women's rights, some similarities are apparently inevitable. Such resemblances thus point to the transmission of certain clusters of ideological stances bound up with specific mythical figures, here Satan, in a sustained and fairly stable manner through many decades and even generations. *Lolly Willowes* is the pinnacle of the nineteenth-century tradition that the present study has sketched. Satan's role here as a benign and compassionate liberator is one of the least ambiguous positive portrayals of him ever. Moreover, Warner's novel makes the theme of Satan as the emancipator primarily of women fully explicit, even to the point of saying that his assistance to men does not really count.

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[1] Dickinson 1975, p. 656.

[2] Garrity 2003, p. 147.

[3] There are two biographies of Warner (Harman 1989; Mulford 1988). Harman's is the larger and the one I am primarily drawing on in this section. Mulford's focuses on the years 1930–1951, and thus has

very little material related to *Lolly Willowes*. Further, it is not devoted exclusively to Warner but also to her partner, Valentine Ackland. Harman's biography as well as her editing of letters and diaries have been criticized in an intensely personal and involved rant by a friend of Warner's, who objects above all to a supposed softening of his friend's hard-line communism (Rattenbury 1996, esp. pp. 228–229, 231, 233–234). He also dismisses Harman's analysis of Warner's literary works, writing contemptuously about 'a bibble-babble sixth-form essay of an introduction' that Harman has produced (p. 231). Biographies and selections will unavoidably displease some of those who know an author in private, and one is left with the impression that in this case there also has to be some sort of personal animosity towards the biographer involved (in order to prompt such extremely slighting and rude comments).

[4] Mulford 1988, pp. 7, 108. Quote on p. 108.

[5] On Warner's taste in fashion, see Harman 1989, p. 24, where we learn among other things about one of her 'unbelievable' hats from which 'protruded an artificial lily on a tall stem'.

[6] Garnett 1994, p. 35.

[7] Harman 1989, pp. 20–24, 38–41, 66, 145. On the MI5 monitoring of Warner and Ackland, see Jacobs & Bond 2008.

[8] Wachman 2001, p. 72.

[9] Warner 1926/1928, p. 2.

[10] Ibid., p. 26.

[11] Ibid., pp. 57–58. Warner herself also seems to have done her best to keep men from proposing, as a 1929 diary entry testifies: 'I directed my ingenuity to ward them off from doing it' (Warner 1994, pp. 42–43).

[12] Warner 1926/1928, p. 18. There are clear parallels to Warner's feelings about her own coming-out. Cf. Harman 1989, p. 23.

[13] Warner 1926/1928, p. 24. Joseph Glanvill's *Saducismus triumphatus* (1681) is a lengthy work arguing against those who doubt the existence of witches.

[14] Ibid., p. 31. Her innate affinity for the demonic is, perhaps, also suggested by how she as a child sits 'singing herself a story about a snake' (p. 15). Rosemary Sykes points out that young Laura further plays with a toad, a typical witch animal, and that this might also be in anticipation of her later collusion with Satan. Sykes 2001, p. 15.

[15] Warner 1926/1928, p. 66.

[16] Ibid., pp. 76–77.

[17] Ibid., pp. 81, 94–95. The name of the village is, of course, as Jane Garrity points out, a comic allusion to the witch's broom on which she supposedly flew to the sabbath. Garrity's Freudian inference that the broom has long been a symbol of female potency is perhaps slightly more doubtful as a general statement (Garrity 2003, p. 158). Both Jane Marcus and Barbara Brothers have made the same observation as Garrity (Marcus 1984, p. 152; Brothers 1991, p. 204). I would be open, however, to the possibility that Warner may have been satirizing psychoanalytical clichés by such a reference, since she was aware of Freud's writings and pondered them around the time *Lolly Willowes* was written (on Warner and Freud, see Swaab 2010, p. 33).

[18] Warner 1926/1928, p. 97.

[19] Ibid., p. 117.

[20] Ibid., p. 125.

[21] Ibid., pp. 146–147.

[22] Ibid., p. 149.

[23] Ibid., p. 150.

[24] Ibid., p. 50.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., p. 154.

[27] Ibid., p. 158.

[28] Ibid., pp. 160, 162. Quote on p. 162.

[29] Ibid., p. 165.

[30] Ibid., p. 169.

[31] Ibid., p. 174.

[32] Ibid., p. 175.

[33] Ibid., pp. 175–176.

[34] Ibid., pp. 176–177.

[35] Ibid., p. 178.

[36] Ibid., p. 204.

[37] Ibid., p. 205.

[38] Ibid., p. 207.

[39] Ibid., pp. 208–210.

[40] Ibid., p. 220.

[41] Ibid., p. 230.

[42] Ibid., p. 233.

[43] Ibid., p. 233.

[44] Ibid., pp. 237–238.

[45] Ibid., pp. 238–239.

[46] Ibid., p. 241. The question of the Devil being evil or benevolent is discussed again a few pages on, and Laura concludes: 'His memory was too long, too retentive; there was no appeasing its witness, no hoodwinking it with the present; and that was why at one stage of civilisation people said he was the embodiment of all evil, and then a little later on that he didn't exist' (p. 245). Jacqueline Shin has proposed the Devil's impressive memory may help us understand the function of witchcraft in the tale, which 'can be read as an aesthetic principle that mirrors the author's own and which demands of the reader a retentive memory—to be, that is, on the side of Satan' (Shin 2009, p. 723). For a more pessimistic interpretation of Laura and Satan's relationship, see Draya 2001, p. 24.

[47] Warner 1926/1928, p. 247. The slightly different original ending was published in *The Journal of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society* in 2001 (Warner 2001, pp. 32–34). Warner's publisher had felt this ending was a bit too morbid. Harman 1989, p. 62.

[48] 'The male gaze' as a theoretical concept was, of course, introduced much later (by film scholar Laura Mulvey in 1975), but I do not believe it anachronistic to employ it here in a looser sense of possessive male looking, especially given Laura's pronounced hatred of how Titus surveys the landscape in a proprietorial manner.

[49] Avashti 1999, p. 143.

[50] Marcus 1984, pp. 140–141. Quote on p. 141.

[51] When the gardener appears, Laura at first does not recognize him as Satan, which, as Gay Wachman points out, is an ironic allusion to the Resurrection, where Mary Magdalene at first does not recognize Christ on his return, but mistakes him for the gardener. Wachman 2001, p. 79.

[52] Warner 1926/1928, p. 234.

[53] Ibid., p. 235. That Laura stops herself before including the Devil in the bundle of patriarchal phenomena is an example of Warner's irony and probably shows she was aware of the paradox some might perceive in making this figure a champion of female emancipation.

[54] Ibid., p. 236.

[55] Ibid., p. 51.

[56] Ibid., pp. 150, 220, 235. There is only a brief description of Laura's initial attitude towards religion, early in the novel: 'Laura was not in any way religious. She was not even religious enough to speculate towards irreligion. … Laura was bored by the church which they [brother and sister-in-law] attended. … She was darkly, adventurously drawn to see what services were like amongst Roman Catholics, amongst Huguenots, amongst Unitarians and Swedenborgians' (pp. 52–53).

[57] Avashti 1999, p. 156.

[58] Cf. Brothers 1991, p. 210.

[59] Nesbitt 2003, p. 450. A highly unsatisfactory solution is offered by Jane Marcus, who puts forward that the 'male principle (Satan) is a fantasy for Laura, not a reality she has to live with' (Marcus 1984, p. 157). As I will argue further on in this chapter, there is no reason to assume Satan is a fantasy of Laura's.

[60] Garrity 2003, p. 153.

[61] This is evident, for example, in that, as mentioned earlier, her upbringing *furthered* 'a temperamental indifference to getting married' (Warner 1926/1928, p. 26). As Garrity points out, though her father may himself hold traditional views of gender, he 'does not impede his daughter's rejection of the conventions of femininity' (Garrity 1995, p. 249).

[62] Garrity 1995; Garrity 2003; Marcus 1984, p. 136; Swaab 2010; Bacon 2011, pp. 33–82. The last two focus more on queerness than lesbianism specifically, though both are emphasized.

[63] Warner 1926/1928, p. 230.

[64] Ibid., pp. 187–191. Quote on p. 188. R. B. Russell comments: '[T]here is really no difference between society whether it organizes itself in a church to worship God, or in a field to worship the Devil. The implication is that neither society succeeds in becoming any closer to the particular deity sought. Lolly Willowes only truly becomes a witch as a woman on her own' (Russell 2001, p. 30). Warner can thus be seen as putting forward a form of individualist-anarchist world view, symbolized by Satan's seeming disinterest in being formally worshipped.

[65] Warner 1926/1928, p. 192.

[66] Garrity 2003, p. 151. For example, the connecting of specific years in the novel's chronology to events in the real world relating to lesbianism appear at times a little far-fetched, and seeing Laura's pocket as 'a hidden eroticized space that synecdochially stands in for her female genitalia' seems a rather strained symbolic reading (Garrity 2003, p. 167). Gay Wachman dismisses the interpretation (in the form presented in Garrity's 1995 article), admitting to a lesbo-erotic element being present, but underscoring that the novel 'starts and ends with celibate contentment' (Wachman 2001, p. 78). However, Wachman perhaps relies too much on biographical data when she instead reads the theme of forbidden desire in Warner's early novels as dealing with the author's own affair with a married man (p. 83). For further criticism of Garrity's reading, see Swaab 2010, p. 30.

[67] Garrity 2003, p. 152.

[68] Ibid., p. 152. As mentioned in chapter 8, Carpenter had also written a poem ('The Secret of Time and Satan', 1888) that combines a form of mystic Satanism with homoerotic undertones. Garrity does not seem to be aware of this. For Carpenter's views on witches, see Carpenter [1914]/1921, pp. 36–54.

[69] Stelzl 1983, p. 48.

[70] Garrity 2003, p. 156.

[71] Ibid., p. 172.

[72] Warner 1926/1928, p. 129.

[73] Garrity 1995, p. 257. For further examples of potential indications that Great Mop is a homosexual community, see Swaab 2010, p. 35.

[74] Swaab 2010, pp. 30–32.

[75] Wachman 2001, pp. 31–32.

[76] On Warner's bisexual friends, see e.g. Harman 1989, p. 44.

[77] Castle 1990, p. 230.

[78] Avashti 1999, p. 26.

[79] The only explicit reference I have found to Gothic authors in her published correspondence is a mention of Horace Walpole in a 1977 letter. Garnett 1994, p. 228.

[80] Warner 1926/1928, p. 233.

[81] Avashti 1999, p. 165; Marcus 1984, p. 157; Brothers 1991, p. 206.

[82] Robert L. Caserio reaches a similar conclusion regarding this matter, stating that the 'narrative cancels our doubts' about Laura having made an actual pact with Satan. Caserio 1990, p. 263.

[83] Gillian Beer has suggested that a later Warner novel, *After the Death of Don Juan* (1936), could be viewed as anticipating magic realism, but I have seen no one look at *Lolly Willowes* from this perspective (Beer 1999, p. 82). Trying to make the fantastic more palatable for highbrow modernist-realist tastes by reductionist psychologizing is an unfortunate tendency in much scholarship.

[84] Knoll 1993, p. 357. To what extent such a challenge is present in the classic Gothic novels is debatable, as we have seen in chapter 5.

[85] This is also similar to how Blavatsky stated she used the symbol of Lucifer, as a way to disturb her readers and make them pay attention to prejudices and false received notions. Cf. the section on Blavatsky in chapter 4.

[86] Garrity 2003, p. 173.

[87] Warner 1926/1928, p. 200.

[88] Ibid., pp. 207, 241–242.

[89] Garrity 2003, p. 174.

[90] Warner 1926/1928, p. 177.

[91] Knoll 1993, p. 355. In a largely nonsensical crypto-Jungian goddess-feminist reading of the novel, Jane Marcus suggests it deals with a 'longing for a lost sisterhood under the protection of the goddess'—in spite of there being absolutely no references whatsoever to goddesses in the text (Marcus 1984, p. 136). Marcus consistently ignores the explicit diabolical symbolism and tries to turn it into something related to goddesses. For example, when Titus is attacked by a swarm of wasps and Laura muses 'O Beelzebub, God of flies!' (Warner 1926/1928, p. 220), Marcus does not mention the protagonist's comment but instead writes that bees (note that in the novel they are wasps) are 'creatures [Jungian psychologist] Erich Neumann describes as sacred to the mother goddess' (Marcus 1984, p. 139). Had Murray, whom Warner to some extent drew on, postulated that witches were goddess worshippers this would have made at least a bit more sense, but she did not. There are only a few lines in her book that could be taken as indicating this (i.e. Murray 1921, p. 12), but shortly afterwards she emphatically states that the worship of a male deity was the more or less exclusive focus of the witch-cult (p. 13).

[92] Considering phrasings in Michelet's book like 'he [Satan] gives his followers the joy and wild liberty of all free things of Nature, the rude delight of being a world apart, all-sufficient unto itself' (Michelet [1862]/1939, p. 70), it almost seems difficult to imagine Warner was not familiar with this work, but it could still be another case of ideas being disseminated in a less direct manner.

[93] Faxneld 2006a, pp.164–165; Faxneld 2011c, pp. 5–6.

[94] See chapter 8.

[95] Warner 1926/1928, p. 240.

[96] Ibid., p. 246.

[97] Mäyrä 1999.

[98] As mentioned in chapter 2, a female or hermaphrodite Satan can also be found in many descriptions and depictions of the serpent in the Garden of Eden (identified with the Devil in Christian tradition) where it has a woman's face, for example, in classics of English literature like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–1596) (Bruyn 1979, p. 131). Given Warner's work on Tudor music (as well as her well-rounded education in general), it appears probable she would have read Spenser. She may also have seen such depictions in the numerous churches she visited during her travels all over England when researching church music in their archives.

[99] Brothers 1991, p. 209.

[100] Bacon 2011, pp. 78–79. Quote on p. 79.

[101] Avashti 1999, p. 152. *Lolly Willowes* was begun in 1923, and a manuscript was finished in the autumn of 1924. Harman 1989, pp. 59–60.

[102] Lawrence's 'Old Archangels' and the two poems both named 'Lucifer' (Lawrence 1967, pp. 614, 697) were written in 1929 and published posthumously in *Last Poems* in 1932. We can here note that Warner was, incidentally, an admirer of Lawrence (Mulford 1988, p. 3). The tentative dating of Crowley's 'Hymn to Lucifer' is from Schreck 2001, p. 4.

[103] She read Blake in the 1910s, and in the late 1920s wrote poems that, according to Harman, contain deliberate echoes of his work (Harman 1989, pp. 45, 79). Byron and Shelley are mentioned in several of Warner's letters from the 1940s onwards, and it would be extremely unlikely for a well-educated Briton born in 1893 not to be familiar with them from a fairly young age (Warner 1982, pp. 111, 113,

130, 180, 205, 211, 274, 288, 304). An indication of such familiarity can perhaps be seen in Laura's assurance that '[n]ot one of the monuments and tinkerings of man could impose on the satanic mind' (Warner 1926/1928 pp. 230–231). This seems to me a clear reference to the Romantic radical individualist reading of the assertion by Milton's Satan that '[t]he mind is its own place' (see chapter 3).

104 There appears to be a Whitmanian echo in Laura's insistence on the Devil's unchanging mind and long memory (Warner 1926/1928, pp. 230–231, 245) that is quite similar to how Whitman's Satan states that '[n]or time nor change shall ever change me or my words' (Whitman 1868, p. 379). This sentiment may also, of course, be derived from the Romantics' interpretation of a passage in Milton (see the preceding note). On Warner's setting to music of Whitman, see Harman 1989, p. 60.

105 Warner mentions Sand in two letters from the 1970s (Warner 1982, pp. 256, 293). She read French (Harman 1989, pp. 20, 49), though this would not have been necessary in this case, since the novel was available in English translation.

106 Wachman 2001, p. 31. Wachman notes that we find a strong focus on the class system already in an essay that Warner wrote in 1916.

107 Rattenbury 1996, p. 209. Socialism later became a highly explicit theme in Warner's fiction. Her 1936 novel *Summer Will Show* ends with the protagonist reading *The Communist Manifesto*, and the final page consists of a long quotation of the beginning of Marx's pamphlet. As Robert L. Caserio puts it, 'the novel might be said to erase itself for the sake of the polemical tract' (Caserio 1990, p. 264). According to Harman, Warner's fellow communists did not appreciate *Lolly Willowes* much. Harman 1989, p. 157.

108 In a much later interview, Warner professed a positive view of anarchists, stating that 'if the English turn to the left at all, they are natural anarchists' (quoted in Harman 1989, p. 141). On Warner and anarchism, see also Mulford 1988, p. 89.

109 Instead, it has been proposed (Draya 2001, p. 22) that Warner's Satan is inspired by that in Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown' (1835), a bleak short story not at all positive towards the Devil. The similarities with Hawthorne's depiction of Satan and the witches' sabbath seem to me so general that they are more likely due to a shared familiarity with historical records concerning witchcraft trials (even if Warner mentions reading a different text by Hawthorne in a 1971 letter; Warner 1982, p. 252).

110 Conway [1878]/1880, pp. 95, 302.

111 Frustratingly, Warner's diary, which has been published, begins in October 1927, so nothing can be learned from it about the writing of *Lolly Willowes*.

112 Harman 1989, p. 59. In a 1963 note on *Lolly Willowes*, Warner also mentions reading Robert Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings before the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland (1829–1833)*, in which 'the actual speech of the accused impressed on me that these witches were witches for love; that witchcraft was more than Miss Murray's Dianic cult; it was the romance of their hard lives, their release from dull futures' (p. 59). In two pages of undated handwritten notes on *Lolly Willowes*, Warner states that it was Murray's book that reawakened her interest in witches, which had been dormant since her exploration of the figure in childhood. On the latter, she comments: 'My interest in witchcraft had been evoked much earlier by the [illegible] of spells and invocations quoted in Mackay's *Popular Delusions*, and I had repeated them to my black cat. He listened, but did not reply; perhaps my Latin was not good enough' (Warner, n.d., p. 1). I am grateful to Morine Krissdóttir, honorary curator of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Archive at the Dorset County Museum, for sharing photocopies of these notes with me. In part, they would seem to be working notes for Warner's article 'Modern Witches', which I will discuss.

[113] Simpson 1994, pp. 89–90, 92.

[114] Cohn 1973/2000, p. 152. For scathing critiques of Murray, see e.g. Cohn 1973/2000, pp. 152–160; Hutton 1999/2001, pp. 194–201.

[115] Murray 1921, pp. 158–159.

[116] Garrity 2003, p. 163.

[117] Garnett 1994, p. 29.

[118] Ibid., pp. 27–28.

[119] Avashti 1999, p. 163.

[120] Bacon 2011, p. 40. In my opinion Bacon overemphasizes the pagan dimensions of Warner's Devil, as evidenced again on pp. 67–68, where she draws on an allusion Warner makes to a Bible passage that deals with the suppression of 'the altars of strange gods'.

[121] Murray 1921, pp. 175–185.

[122] Garrity 2003, p. 163.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Quoted in Bacon 2011, p. 38. The lecture, of course, is not a retrospective 'key' to the novel, nor can the attendee's encapsulation of it from memory be assumed to be completely reliable. In *Lolly Willowes* there is, as mentioned, no celebration of fertility and Laura does not experience the 'letting go' at the witches' sabbath as particularly enjoyable.

[125] Simon 2010.

[126] Harman 1989, p. 66. This anecdote might be apocryphal, since Harman says she has been unable to trace its source (p. 332). Peter Swaab has speculated Woolf may have read *Lolly Willowes* and been inspired by it when she wrote *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which has some strikingly similar phrasings. Swaab 2010, p. 44.

[127] Quoted in Harman 1989, p. 249.

[128] Ibid., p. 65.

[129] Ibid., p. 272.

[130] Ibid., pp. 65–66. It can also be mentioned that composer John Ireland put *Lolly Willowes* to music, in a sonatina that had a last movement 'Sabbath' based on it, and in the 1960s there were plans—never realized—for musical and film adaptations of it. Warner 1994, pp. 16, 287.

[131] Waters 2012.

[132] Silverman 1997, p. 115; Avashti 1999, pp. 127–128, 173. As Avashti explains, the reason for the large number of returns on *Lolly Willowes* is not known. It could also be the case that many subscribers returned the book unopened or unread.

[133] The scholarship referred to in this chapter represents more or less the totality of available publications on it. In 1978, the novel was issued by the Women's Press in the United Kingdom, cementing its reputation as an important feminist work. More recently, in 1993, a new edition was published by Virago, the largest women's imprint in the world, with subsequent printings in 1995, 2000, and 2012.

[134] Caserio 1990, p. 254.

[135] The following discussion of the reception of Lolly Willowes draws on this scrapbook. The clippings are from English language newspapers all over the world, from the United Kingdom and the United States to India and South Africa. I wish to acknowledge the kind and efficient help of the staff at the University of Reading Library with photographing the frail scrapbook.

[136] *Yorkshire Post*, 3 February 1926; *Daily Herald*, 21 April 1926. The *Daily Herald* reviewer added, however: 'Not that there is anything shocking in Miss Warner's book, except to those who reflect upon the age in which so futile a literary exercise can have found favour even among a clique.' As can be gleaned from this, his objections pertained primarily to how trivial he felt the subject matter to be.

[137] *The Daily Chronicle*, 29 January 1926.

[138] *The Outlook*, 6 February 1926. These remarks should probably be read as ironic.

[139] Hartley 1926.

[140] Simon 2010.

[141] *Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1926.

[142] Richards 1926, p. 319.

[143] *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 April 1926.

[144] Chatto & Windus scrapbook, p. 104.

[145] Walker 1926.

[146] *The Daily Mirror*, 13 July 1926.

[147] London 1926 (with an almost exact retelling the day after, 5 August 1926, in the *Bristol Times & Mirror*).

[148] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 June 1926.

[149] 'The Modern Witch: Every Village Has Got One', undated [probably ca. June–August 1926] article from unidentified newspaper [belongs to the Chatto & Windus file, but is loose, not pasted into the press cuttings book].

[150] Warner 1926.

[151] Warner 1926b.

[152] Ibid. The tales of Warner's childhood experiments in witchcraft are also related in two newspaper articles from the 4th and 5th of August, which almost appear to be based on an advance glance at the article which subsequently appeared in *Eve. The Daily Graphic*, 4 August 1926; *The Bristol Times & Mirror*, 5 August 1926.

[153] Garnett 1994, p. 26.

[154] *Saturday Review of Literature*, 6 February 1926; Clark 1926; *New York Times*, 27 June 1926.

[155] Morley 1926, p. 555.

[156] *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 February 1926.

[157] Richards 1926, p. 320.

[158] *G. K.'s Weekly*, 20 February 1926.

[159] O'Malley 1926.

[160] *The Daily News*, 23 February 1926.

[161] C.R.G. 1926.

[162] E.g., *The Observer*, 7 February 1926; *The Scotsman*, 18 February 1926; *Bolton Evening News*, 18 March 1926; *India's Pictorial Magazine*, 13 March 1926.

[163] *Evening Standard*, 5 February 1926.

[164] *Country Life*, 20 February 1926.

[165] *Bolton Evening News*, 18 March 1926.

[166] *Birmingham Post*, 29 January 1926.

[167] *The Spectator*, 6 February 1926. See also *Empire Review*, 6 March 1926.

[168] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 June 1926.

[169] Warner 1926/1928, pp. 79–81.

[170] Wachman 2001, p. 79.

All this they got from reading—in the orthodox witches' manner—the book of Genesis backwards.

KAREN BLIXEN, *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934)[1]

12

Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

Having reached the end of our journey, it is time to integrate and summarize some of the findings of the study. As quite a few pages have passed since the reader was introduced to the primary research questions, they will be repeated here in conjunction with the attempt to answer each one in a manner drawing on the discussions and conclusions from all the chapters. This twelfth and closing chapter will then be rounded off with some final overarching reflections. First, however, a brief summary and chronology of the central examples will be provided.

A CURSORY CHRONOLOGICAL EXPOSé OF SATANIC FEMINISM, 1772–1932

The Gothic genre, with its emphasis on hero-villains and moral ambiguity, contains several demonic women putting forward convincing subversive arguments for their amoral worldviews, which are distinctly at odds with all precepts of Christianity. These anti-heroines may have been appealing to some readers (with feminist inclinations) due to their status as independent and strong women. Their emancipated state could be understood as completely intertwined with their diabolical nature. Jacques Cazotte's silver-tongued female Satan, Biondetta, in *Le Diable amoureux* (1772) is the first in a long series of such fictional characters, which also includes William

Beckford's Carathis (in *Vathek*, 1786), Matthew G. Lewis's Matilda (in *The Monk*, 1796), and Théophile Gautier's Clarimonde (in 'La Morte amoureuse', 1836). Charlotte Dacre's Victoria (in *Zofloya*, 1806), who is the protagonist of the novel, achieves a form of agency through collusion with Satan, but this notion is much more sympathetically expressed in how Melmoth (the Devil figure in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, 1820) functions as a speaker of uncomfortable truths and an initiator in relation to the innocent Immalee. All these works are distinguished by a degree of ambivalence. However, even the early Gothic text that has the strongest tendency to show sympathy for the demonic feminine, 'La Morte amoureuse', does not contain any feminist sentiments to speak of.

Actual Satanic feminism arises shortly after Satanism (*sensu lato*) itself appears for certain in world history. Percy Bysshe Shelley, the prime mover in the creation of literary Satanism, was a feminist. In *The Revolt of Islam* (1818) he merges the two. The Satanically inspired female revolutionary in this narrative declares that the emancipation of woman is a prerequisite for the true liberation of mankind. Hence, *The Revolt of Islam*, with its frank combining of equally unequivocal Satanism and feminism, makes Percy Shelley the first Satanic feminist. More vague tendencies in this direction can also be found in Lord Byron's 1821 *Heaven and Earth*, where rebel angels (portrayed in a fairly positive manner, unlike the vindictive and cruel God) offer an escape route from the unwanted prospect of submissive marriage to mortal men. Another main exponent of literary Satanism was Charles Baudelaire. Some of his poems in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) express a sympathy for literally demonic lesbians that borders on a siding with an infernal femininity against an oppressive male God. However, making a feminist of Baudelaire for this reason would hardly be very convincing. Something similar could be said about Algernon Swinburne's hymns to the demonic feminine in *Poems and Ballads* (1866).

By contrast, the historian Jules Michelet's *La Sorcière* (1862), ostensibly a study of the historical witch, expresses several sentiments that could be read as feminist. To Michelet, the witch was a proto-socialist, who perceived intimate ties between the Lord in heaven and feudal lords. The Black Mass, he claimed, constituted a redemption of Eve and a sacralization —by women, for women—of the female body. Furthermore, the witch's knowledge of medicinal herbs freed woman from slavery to her biological functions. On the whole, however, the book is quite conservative in its views

of women's place in the universe. Several later figures would nonetheless read the semi-feminist parts of the text as its most crucial aspects and expand on them.

In 1864, American feminist Eliza W. Farnham, in the book *Woman and Her Era*, celebrated the Edenic serpent as a bringer of wisdom, whom she contrasted with a God who wanted to keep mankind in bondage. Eve being the first to accept the offer from the benign reptile was a clear sign of woman's spiritual superiority, according to Farnham. This is one of the first instances of feminist counter-reading of Genesis 3, a tactic that would be employed time and time again by later writers. In a very different vein, women's autonomy as diabolical in some sense was also a motif in Austrian Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's proto-Decadent novel *Venus im Pelz* (1870). Increases in agency achieved by the protagonist's mistress are here framed in demonic metaphors. The novel concludes with a speech about the need for more rights for women, making it possible to read what has preceded it as a feminist narrative in some sense (though there are also many problems with such an interpretation).

Jewish mythology might at times have seemed a less risky thing to subvert for gentiles than its Christian equivalent. The case in point is the Lilith myth, which was remodelled in some rather drastic ways towards the end of the nineteenth century. The freethinking Unitarian minister Moncure Daniel Conway's *Demonology and Devil-lore* (1878), like Michelet's book purportedly a scholarly monograph, contains praise of Lilith as the first feminist in her refusal to obey Adam. Ada Langworthy Collier soon after turned the tale of Lilith into a full poetic epic in *Lilith: The Legend of the First Woman* (1885), where the likeable title character takes up with Satan—a tender figure who proves to be such a firm friend of equality between the sexes that his promise of such conditions in their marriage is, literally, carved in stone. Usage of Lilith as a feminist icon continued throughout the period under scrutiny here.

In the 1870s, Sarah Bernhardt—who was very popular among feminists—had become a star with wicked women as her speciality on stage. Her offstage persona (if indeed she was ever offstage in an absolute sense) also reflected this. Serpent jewellery, a hat crowned with a taxidermied bat and a series of homes with witchy decorations were clear expressions of an identity game where demonic motifs were used to parade her refusal of conventions, especially those pertaining to women. Being a talented

sculptress, she made the idea of herself as a demon woman manifest in the small self-portrait figurine *Encrier fantastique* (1880). Another defier of gender norms was the "she-male" (as one of her associates described her) Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

The year 1888 saw the publication of Blavatsky's influential esoteric bestseller *The Secret Doctrine*, where she explained that the serpent, Satan, had opened the eyes of mankind, and was a bringer of gnosis aiding in our deliverance from Jehovah the demiurge. It appears likely that this counter-reading was related to the role Genesis 3 still played in limiting women's options at this time. For example, traditional understandings of it were used to legitimate the exclusion of women from priestly office—surely something a female religious leader was interested in subverting (at least pertaining to her own organization). The prominent presence of feminists in Theosophy might also have led to a certain catering to this audience and would thus be a reason to single out this Bible passage to invert. Blavatsky may also have been aware of Farnham and others seeing Genesis 3 as a pillar of patriarchy. Whatever the intentions, Blavatsky's alternative reading of the serpent as a rebel hero had clear feminist implications.

Her view of it would become quite popular among freethinkers. A later example of a similar interpretation is a paper by the American feminist Henriette Greenebaum Frank, presented at a Jewish Women's congress in 1894. Unlike Farnham and Blavatsky, however, Frank explicitly disassociates the serpent from Satan. The year after, in 1895, the first volume of *The Woman's Bible* was published. This work, with famous American suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton as its main editor, was the first large-scale systematic feminist effort to tackle the Bible. Stanton was an avid reader of Blavatsky, and the project also involved other Theosophists: Frances Lord, from England, and Stanton's fellow Americans Frances Ellen Burr and Matilda Joslyn Gage. In her own comments on Genesis 3, Stanton likens Satan to Socrates or Plato, and lauds Eve's decision to partake of the fruit that this scaly philosophical being offers. Lillie Deveraux and Lucinda Chandler, two other contributors to the book, also praise Eve's endowment to mankind's evolution. Stanton and her collaborators highlighted the connection between traditional readings of this passage and patriarchal oppression. As an alternative, they referred to an "esoteric" understanding of the Fall (meaning, it would seem, a Blavatskian take on it), which they claimed disproved this misogynist tradition.

Michelet's motif of witches as praiseworthy feminists was perpetuated in Matilda Joslyn Gage's *Woman, Church and State* (1893) and Charles Leland's *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (1899). Gage, especially, sharpened the edge further, and asserted that supposed medieval Black Masses were celebrated explicitly in defiance of a Christianity whose God and earthly representatives had trampled on women's rights. The witch-feminist nexus was also present in George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893). Egerton's witch was metaphorical, and she used it to draw a picture of present-day "new women". Joris-Karl Huysmans's portrayal of the sinister Mme Chantelouve in his supposedly documentary novel *Là-bas* (1891) was similarly intended to make a statement about contemporary females, but here it was a case of one-sidedly demonizing independent, self-governing women. Devil worship itself was held up as a feminine thing in *Là-bas*, which was the most influential text of its period about the practice of religious Satanism. Huysmans's chart-topper had been immediately preceded by Catulle Mendès's lurid novel *Méphistophéla* (1890), where Satanism was painted as a misandric lesbian sect presided over by a female Satan to whom the cut-off penises of infant boys were offered. Mendes's novel, like for example the Gothic novels of the previous turn of the century, showed considerable sympathy for the Satanic protagonist, and let her justify her ways in long monologues. In *Die Synagoge des Satan* (1896–97), the Berlin-based Decadent Stanisław Przybyszewski concurred with Mendès and Huysmans about the cult of the Devil being dominated by women, and added that Satan had initially been a female deity. Since Przybyszewski was a self-professed Satanist and a consistent semantic inverter (in his philosophy, decadence is progress, evil is good, and so on) these claims take on an ambivalence that makes it hard to read them simply as misogynist fantasies. Instead, there is an undeniable element of celebration in his assertions about how the "evil" of women and witches has functioned as an evolutionary motor—especially considering how evolution was held to be the highest good in his thinking.

Although more fluctuating in their counter-discursive practice, several other Decadents also praised the demonic feminine. This often had its roots in the aforementioned works by Baudelaire and Swinburne, but was at times made even more explicit at the end of the century. For example, English aesthete Theodore Wratislaw's *Caprices* (1893) contains poems where he enthusiastically declares his love of precisely this type of femininity. The fascination with the motif was also reflected in visual art during these years,

where woman was shown as Satan's creation or ally in works like Franz von Stuck's *Die Sünde* (1891), Otto Greiner's *Der Teufel zeigt das Weib dem Volke* (1898), and Alfred Kubin's *Zeugung des Weibes* (ca. 1900–1905). Foremost among the artists dealing with woman in relation to the Devil was the Belgian Félicien Rops, with his 1882 series of engravings titled *Les Sataniques* being the most famous example. Occasionally, he could produce almost sympathetic images of women in league with Satan, as in *La Pomme* (1896).

In a career spanning the years 1901–1909, the Anglo-American heiress Renée Vivien, who lived in Paris and wrote in French, produced poetry and prose where Satan was hailed as a positive figure connected to femininity. In 'La Genèse profane' (1902), the Devil is the creator of woman and beauty, while God is the designer of males, war, and all that Vivien rejects in the universe. Witches and Lilith were other motifs employed by the poetess in her critique of male dominance. Being lesbian, Vivien chose Satanism as a language of resistance to both patriarchy and heterosexuality. She also implemented a peculiar type of Decadent aesthetics in dress, choice of pets (serpents and frogs), and home decoration, which in a manner reflected her siding with Satan, the night, and witches. Text and person were thus conflated.

During the peak of art nouveau jewellery design, 1895–1910, a number of pieces were designed that depicted Eve's collusion with the serpent or her plucking of the forbidden fruit. It is plausible to interpret the fact that women were wearing such adornments as a form of attack on patriarchal vilification of Eve, and its attendant views concerning all women as inferior to men. We can to some extent understand the role-playing of the wealthy marchioness Luisa Casati along these lines as well. Starting in 1903 and up until 1932, she enthusiastically enacted the role of a demon woman. She dressed up as the serpent in the Garden of Eden, hosted a party where the staff were masked as devils, attached ram's horns to her temples, kept serpents as pets, had herself painted as Eve in friendly conversation with Satan, and so on.

In the United States, a young woman named Mary MacLane caused a scandal, and achieved great commercial success, with her autobiographical book *The Story of Mary MacLane* (1902). Over and over again, she describes how she wants to marry Satan and makes him a symbol of liberation—not least from what is expected of her because of her gender. The supposedly autobiographical nature of the text in a way renders MacLane a

participant in the same type of Satanic identity game played by Bernhardt, Vivien, and Casati. Another American player of the game was Theda Bara, who made a series of films between 1914 and 1921 where she appeared as an avenging femme fatale punishing men who treated women badly. In one of the films, she even turned out to be Satan in disguise. Her public persona, carefully crafted by the film studio's publicity department, was sinister and dark, but even so she became a heroine to many women. This can be taken as an example of the appeal of the demon woman identity as a means to empowerment.

A fully explicit depiction of Satan as the emancipator of woman was enfolded in wit, gentle humour, and typically British rural nostalgia in Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *Lolly Willowes* (1926). The spinster protagonist takes her refuge in the countryside and is helped by the Devil to escape from the domination of patriarchy. The book sold well, and received a fine critical reception, but Warner was frustrated with people not comprehending the scathing cultural critique under the appealing surface. It was followed in 1928 by *Sudenmorsian*, a novel by another London-based author, the Finnish diplomat wife Aino Kallas. Here, a woman in seventeenth-century Estonia becomes a werewolf with assistance from Satan. Through this transformation she is set free from the strictures of her possessive husband and the gendered constraints of village life. Like Warner, Kallas inscribes herself in the tradition of Satanic feminism by referring to several of its established motifs, for instance, presenting a view of the eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden as a revelatory and empowering experience. Casati, Bara, Warner, and Kallas are all, to a varying degree, examples of how the motifs of Satanic feminism live on in the decade following World War I.

After this summary of the main events in the history of Satanic feminism, we now turn to the questions posed at the outset of the study.

In the material that we can, in some sense, classify as Satanic feminism, what motifs are recurrent? To an extent this has already been answered by my choice of headings for the sections in chapter 2, which dealt with perennial motifs in this context. However, at the tail end of the book, let us look more specifically at their manifestations in the material at hand and detail which ones turned out to be the most important.

The main motif, which appears time and time again, is that of *Eve's collusion with the serpent in the Garden of Eden, reworked into something*

positive. It was often filtered through Milton's retelling of the event, which quite clearly states that a longing for equality with Adam was an important reason why Eve accepted the fruit offered by the serpent. The most sustained deconstruction of Genesis 3 takes place in Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), and in *The Woman's Bible* (1895). In the latter, an international (but mainly American) group of feminists provides radical perspectives on scripture. These works had been preceded by several women declaring that Eve's striving for knowledge was not evil (a position they argued, for instance, because men were trying to keep them out of higher education using this Bible passage for support), and that the serpent was hence not a malefactor either. In the late nineteenth century, Genesis 3 was still being employed to legitimate a number of oppressive practices, from doctors' refusals of alleviating women's birth pains to demands that women obey their husbands as well as keep silent in Christian congregations. Hence, this chapter had been the target of feminist attacks since at least the 1860s. Some of them had put the serpent in a less sinister light, since this undermined the idea of Eve as the first sinner. Eve's desire for knowledge also had a natural appeal to such women.

There is no way that Blavatsky could have been unaware of how Genesis 3 was often used for patriarchal purposes, and her counter-reading—in spite of it having no specific focus on Eve—fits well with this tradition of feminist subversions. Her own contribution to the tradition must in turn have had an impact on *The Woman's Bible*, since several of those involved were Theosophists. Such reverberations, but more evident, are also found in Susan E. Gay's application of the ideas regarding the Fall from *The Secret Doctrine* in her feminist polemics against men's political use of Genesis 3.

These radical celebrations of the eating of the forbidden fruit were then echoed, for example, in women in Paris and elsewhere wearing jewellery depicting Eve's transgression, Félicien Rops's engraving *La Pomme* (1896), and Luisa Casati assuming the role of the serpent and commissioning a mural where she was portrayed as Eve colluding with it. The motif is also observable in a score of literary texts, like Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes* (1926) and Aino Kallas's *Sudenmorsian* (1928). Since the traditions surrounding Genesis 3 had been part of the core of Christian patriarchal discourse on why women should obediently stay at home and not interfere with men's business, it was only natural that it became a central point of contention when feminists approached Christian mythology. Although

she was not an explicit feminist, Blavatsky's move to turn the serpent, Satan, into a saviour was no doubt of crucial importance here due to her vast cultural influence in alternative circles. Many later radical reworkings of the motif are likely to have been directly or indirectly inspired by her.

The witch is also a frequently recurring motif. Like the story of Eve's succumbing to temptation, it is one of the basic mythological filters through which woman's supposed relation to Satan has been understood. The powerful female figures in the Gothic novels of Beckford and Lewis are hence more or less clearly witches, and in the late eighteenth century such works helped establish the concept of the witch as a self-governing and dominant woman lording over weak men—which held a certain appeal for many feminists. In the following century, the witch as a usurper of male power can be found, for instance, in Burne-Jones's paintings of Vivien stealing Merlin's book of spells. Through Michelet's *La Sorcière* (1862), historical witchcraft was reimagined as a form of rebellion of the subaltern. Partly, feminist revolt was included in this supposed endeavour. This take on the figure was further developed by among others Matilda Joslyn Gage and Charles Leland. Especially the former (but Leland too) made the feminist connection even more explicit and openly celebrated the witch, whom she revered as a proto-suffragette ancestress. It is notable here that Gage did not downplay the Satanism Michelet ascribed to witches, but chose to further sharpen the feminist edge of the (imagined) pro-Satanic and anti-Christian sentiments of the sorceresses of yore. Their purported Black Masses thus became a symbolic protest against patriarchal power both on Earth and in Heaven. This, then, was an appropriation of history with forthright political ends in mind (and a dash of Theosophy added, since Gage was a keen reader of Blavatsky).

George Egerton brought the witch into her own time, as a metaphor for the liberated New Woman. This approach was simultaneously employed by anti-feminists, who attempted to harness the negative implications of the figure to their cause of blackening the reputation of contemporary women's struggle for emancipation. Since it had been declared by medical science that witches were in fact hysterics, and feminists were slandered as both hysterical and modern-day equivalents of witches, the three came to be conflated. This is reflected in Huysmans's portrait of Mme Chantelouve (which certain women were nonetheless sufficiently fascinated by to seek to emulate) in *Là-bas*. By contrast, the conflation is firmly rejected by Gage, who was keen to keep

spotless the reputation of her ancestresses that had defied both feudal and heavenly lords and blasphemed patriarchy in Black Masses. Renée Vivien composed a sympathetic poem ('Enseignement') about witches as outsiders in a patriarchal, heterosexist world, and Sylvia Townsend Warner developed this outsider theme into an entire novel. In *Lolly Willowes*, Warner makes the witch the ultimate emblem of women having a life of their own. The German dancer and choreographer Mary Wigman used the witch to embody female power and ecstasy, while Teresea Feodorowna Ries sculpted her as a defiantly earthy and unashamedly "natural" toenail-cutting woman.

The witch frequently spills over into an adjacent motif: the *demon lover*. Mary MacLane's intense longing to become the Devil's bride and thus escape the constraints of societal norms (especially those governing women) is perhaps the most sustained use of this motif to make a sort of feminist point. She was, however, working in a long-standing tradition. Already Percy Shelley was moving in this direction in *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), as was Byron in *Heaven and Earth* (1821). Byron's female protagonists scorn marriage to mortal men because they feel it represents little but drudgery. Zofloya, the demon lover in Dacre's eponymous 1806 novel, encourages the protagonist's "unwomanly" force of will, while Maturin's Melmoth functions not only as a demon lover but also as an initiator. This applies equally to Stoker's Dracula—who seduces women away from propriety, self-denial, and submission. While Maturin's anti-hero does not simply ruin the heroine (though he indirectly does that too, ultimately) but also brings her true if uncomfortable insights, Dracula is straightforwardly held up as a perverter of womankind by the conservative Stoker. But many, like MacLane, used the demon lover to express a harsh criticism of the gendered hierarchies and prohibitions that society imposes. Emil Kléen's poem 'Pans fest' (1895) has some such tendencies, and Ada Langworthy Collier's *Lilith* (1885) is even more plain-spoken in this respect.

Collier's Satan is the demon lover of a traditionally rather demonic figure herself, the titular Lilith, who is however drawn as very human. Interestingly, this demon lover offers in no uncertain terms what Adam has denied her: an equal marriage. He even engraves this promise in stone. This has led us to another motif, Lilith, who was ever so slowly starting to become something of a feminist symbol at the turn of the century. Renée Vivien also puts her to this use, and the freethinker and feminist Moncure Daniel Conway approvingly announces in his *Demonology and Devil-Lore* (1878) that she

was the first women's rights activist. However, Lilith can be considered a relatively minor motif. This might be because she was rooted in Jewish sources, and gentile feminists did not feel the same need to subvert these as part of their struggle. The old patriarchal narratives about Lilith were not powerful legitimating devices used to support the oppression of (non-Jewish) women in the way that, for instance, Genesis 3 was.

A motif that does appear quite often is that of *Satan as a woman or womanly*. The notion itself was fairly prevalent in Christian lore, not least in the many depictions of the Edenic serpent with a female face, breasts, and so on. Major later popularizers of this idea were Cazotte, with his she-devil Biondetta, and Éliphas Lévi with his hermaphrodite devil-figure Baphomet (which came to be more straightforwardly identified with Satan as time went on). It is this tradition that is the starting point (or at least an important intertext) when a Theosophist writes a poem in praise of Lady Lucifer, Przybyszewski proposes that Satan (his own "god", since he was a self-identified Satanist) was originally a woman, Sarah Bernhardt sculpts herself as a female Satan, Catulle Mendès describes a she-devil presiding over a misandric Black Mass (in a novel that is highly ambiguous in terms of its "message", but which was received favourably by some lesbian feminists), or when Renée Vivien holds up a gentle, languid Satan as the creator of woman and Sapphic poetry (associating the figure with everything she views as positive, that is, culturally coded as feminine). Feminizing Satan serves to construct the complete, and (in this context) positive, opposite of a Christian God perceived as patriarchal, misogynist, and tyrannical.[2] It can thus be seen as one potential logical move in the process of creating a counter-myth to subvert the hegemonic mythology. An equally logical option would, of course, be to refuse the coding of the Satanic and evil as feminine, and instead claim God as feminine. This, however, is not the strategy that interests us here. Finally, it is worth noting that the female Devil stands in sharp contrast to that which we find in many demon lover texts, where the Prince of Darkness is often highly masculine. Even in these works, however, he still functions as a kindly liberator who breaks the rule of the despotic patriarchate (more on this later).

To recapitulate, the main motifs in the material are: (1) reworkings of Eve's role in the Fall into something positive, (2) the witch as a proto-feminist figure, (3) the demon lover reconceived as a liberator who empowers women, and (4) the feminized, benevolent Satan who is contrasted

with an oppressive male God. An additional minor motif is Lilith as a (counter-)mythical feminist predecessor.

What sort of individuals usually expressed these ideas—what was their social class, level of education, temperament, and political orientation? The discourse of Satanic feminism has always been the domain of educated middle- and upper-class individuals. Since it is often quite subtle, and draws on theological, historical, and literary material of a considerable complexity, a decent foundation in these fields was a prerequisite for being able to contribute to it. In the nineteenth century, such learning was a privilege reserved for the upper echelons of society. There are no members of the working class among the producers of Satanic feminism, but several people belonging to the nobility (Percy Shelley, Blavatsky, Marie Madeleine, and Casati) or coming from extremely wealthy commoner families, like Vivien did. Others may not have been baronesses or millionaires, but certainly had a solidly upper-middle class background that entailed a robust schooling in the humanities. Sylvia Townsend Warner's father was a schoolmaster at the prestigious Harrow school, Aino Kallas came from one of the most eminent academic families in Finland, and so on. American suffragettes like Gage, Stanton, Chandler, and Deveraux also tended to come from educated, well-read family circumstances.[3]

Since it conveyed revolutionary views on the place of women in society (albeit in some cases with a rather single-minded focus on the liberation of the individual Satanic feminist herself, with her sisters being more or less neglected), Satanic feminism was naturally never expressed by those in positions of any notable official power. Instead, they tended to be radical freethinkers and agitators or bohemian artists and authors (but often possessing the kind of wealth making them invulnerable to the potentially disastrous consequences of such provocations). Moreover, the lack of official influence, of course, relates to the fact that most of them were women, and therefore automatically powerless in the political and official sphere, at least compared to males in general. There were admittedly some women with a vast influence in this time as well (e.g. Queen Victoria, in terms of legislative governmental power, or certain conservative female debaters, in terms of informal cultural dominance).[4] The Satanic feminists, however, belonged quite exclusively to what Bruce Lincoln calls the marginal intelligentsia. Suffragettes like Matilda Joslyn Gage and those

contributors to *The Woman's Bible* coming up with drastic reinterpretations of Genesis 3 were barred from politics due to their gender. The counter-discursive strategy, we can infer from this, is one utilized by those lacking (or for some reason unwilling to employ) direct political means, or is used as a complementary method to such a course of action. In the just-mentioned case, the counter-discourse on religion was part of a broader political and collectivist feminist endeavour that was openly announced.[5] Some did not want to get explicitly political for some reason, although they were well aware of the political implications of their writings. Blavatsky, Marie Madeleine, Renée Vivien, Mary MacLane, Sylvia Townsend Warner, and Aino Kallas might be cases in point.

This leads us to the question of their temperament. Many of those we have met in the preceding chapters were radical individualists. The connection between Satanic discourse and individualism had been established ever since the Romantics' fascination with the Miltonic Satan's speech about the mind being its own place. Such individualism was in many cases flaunted to the world through extreme modes of everyday dress and extravagant costume games, as in the cases of Bernhardt, Casati, Vivien, and Warner. The American suffragette circle that gave rise to *The Woman's Bible* did not share this ethos of hard-line individualism. Nor was their Satanic feminism anywhere near as unequivocal as, for instance, Vivien's. All my examples have one temperamental similarity, however: an enthusiasm for provocation and confrontational polemics or deeds. If not, they would never have drawn on Satanic feminism in their activities in the first place. Making a hero of Satan is synonymous with courting controversy.

Politically, Satanic feminists were, of course, always "progressive" in some sense and opposed to the dictates coming from most Christian churches concerning what was allowable for women. Aside from this, they typically belonged to the outer fringes of the political spectrum. Some, like Shelley and Michelet, were revolutionary sympathizers with a desire to lift a perceived yoke of class oppression from the populace. But most seem to have been militant individualists first and foremost, with little concern for "the people". Vivien, MacLane, and Casati are good examples of this. In some cases, for instance, Ada Langworthy Collier, we know little of their political orientation, but it is likely these figures would have followed the same general pattern as the others. One thing is completely certain: each and every producer of Satanic feminist counter-myths shared a conviction that

institutionalized Christianity was a major stumbling block on the path to individual or collective liberation for women—hence the choice of Satan as a symbolic ally.

A final, striking resemblance between some of the key figures is their lesbianism. Vivien, MacLane, and Warner were all (or, in the last case, shortly after writing the work analysed here, became) predominantly homosexual. This surely gave them a strong feeling of being outsiders, the intensity of which must have far surpassed that felt by female intellectuals in general in a male-dominated world. The pressure exerted by the contemporary view of homosexuals as "inverts" could partially explain their choice of adopting a more universal stance of inversion: Satanism.

What was the typical readership of the texts and how were they received? Romantic Satanist texts, of which *The Revolt of Islam* is the only one that can be counted as an unambiguous instance of Satanic feminism, were harshly attacked by conservative reviewers but in the long run turned out to be wildly popular with a reading audience that encompassed far more strata of society than those with revolutionary or progressive sympathies. This illustrates an obvious but important point: radical texts do not always have a predominantly radical readership. Many were (and still are) interested in reading this type of literature in order to be titillated or horrified, or because it has other qualities (e.g. being aesthetically admirable) than its ideological content. When it comes to Gothic novels, which were a lot less seditious and dissident than the works of an author like Shelley, the salacious and provocative content would have been the main point for most. Here, no clearly stated liberal, reformist ideas were generally in the way of such enjoyment. It is difficult to gauge how great a portion of the audience picked up on the hints at sympathy for the Devil and his minions present in works like those by Cazotte, Beckford, Dacre, Maturin, and Gautier. That at least some would have been impressed, perhaps even convinced, by the eloquent speeches of figures like Biondetta, Melmoth, and Clarimonde seems a reasonable assumption. One indication of this is the enthusiasm Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb showed for Cazotte's female Satan.

Aside from a few exceptions—such as Wratislaw and Vivien—most of the books discussed here were bestsellers, or at least widely read by the international avant-garde (Przybyszewski). The typical readership, therefore, cannot be reduced to a narrow group. The intense reporting in the

international press on the doings of Casati, Bernhardt, and Bara made the "text" of their demonic personae available to a worldwide audience in much the same manner. This can also be said of the paintings of the pre-Raphaelites, which were widely exhibited and reproduced.

Where the Satanic sympathies were clearly visible, an amount of outrage was common in terms of critical reception. Shelley was certainly the target of such reactions, but they abated as time went on. Later works in the same vein were therefore not as often attacked because of expressions of love for Lucifer, although some guardians of morality like Max Nordau did make this a key issue in declarations about the dangers of modern art and literature. As the dominance of Christian churches over Western culture waned somewhat (at least in the official, public sphere), the inclination in mainstream discourse to be upset about a little symbolic Satanism decreased. To believers, especially of a conservative bent (still a sizeable portion of the population in most countries around the year 1900), Satanism continued to be highly upsetting. This was the reason why it remained relevant for those who saw institutionalized Christianity as an obstacle on the road to female emancipation. Despite the fact that the official discourse of Western states and their administrations had become less religious towards the end of the nineteenth century, religious arguments were still being used in political, "rational" contexts to motivate the subjugation of woman (as in the example where a feminist Theosophist in turn employed Blavatsky's Satanist reading of Genesis 3 to argue against an instance of such usage in Parliament).

The destabilization of the Bible that Renée Vivien engaged in never seems to have upset anyone overtly, presumably simply because few conservative Christians were interested in reading her poetry. Marie Madeleine, whose use of Luciferian lesbianism as a motif was hardly as earnest, reached a wider market and awakened some antipathy for her sensationalism. The use of Satan as a liberator by a bestselling author like Mary MacLane was bothersome to critics, and they did their best to explain it away in various ways (e.g. transforming her liberating Satan into a simple mortal suitor). More hostile commentators saw her Satanism, along with her alleged man-hating, as one of several signs marking her personality as pathological. In contrast, Sylvia Townsend Warner, who wrote a quarter of a century later, was rather irritated that no one detected the cultural criticism embedded in her quaint and humorous novel. By now, the Devil was seen as an entertaining curiosity, even among most members of the Church of England.

This probably softened the blow from Warner's pairing of a positive portrayal of him with a rather scathing criticism of Christianity as one of the prime institutions of patriarchal oppression. Nevertheless, a novel that sold as well as *Lolly Willowes* would have had a considerable cultural impact. Like the other widely read texts discussed here, it should therefore be deemed a fairly important factor in the process of (further) destabilizing the truth claims of Christianity—especially the support the story from Genesis 3 supposedly gave to the subjugation of women. More programmatic attempts to achieve this, such as *The Woman's Bible*, probably accomplished this effect at least in suffrage circles, where it must have set many a reader wondering about the conventional interpretation of the serpent in Eden as evil (and the ostensible ratification this gave to women being ruled by men).

While more thoroughgoing societal transformations relating to economics, geopolitics, and the complex remodellings bound up with processes of modernization are, of course, main factors in Christianity's loss of hegemony, subversive cultural expressions in, for example, pictorial art, literature, cinema, and the personae of celebrities are a factor to be reckoned with too. We can here ask a "chicken-or-the-egg" question: Did the diminishing power of Christianity make the latter expressions possible, or vice versa? My firm conviction, as I have already stated in the introduction, is that they functioned in tandem. It is thus impossible to determine which came "first", the ideas or the processes creating a situation where they are possible to express. All ideas arise from a historical context and need a receptive environment to gain an audience, but these contexts and environments have in turn been powerfully influenced by earlier ideas (and so on, *ad perpetuum*).

What hermeneutical strategies were employed when counter-reading the Bible or subverting misogynist motifs in Christian myth? We can discern two main approaches to the Bible in the material. First, there are those who engage directly with specific Bible passages, for example, by quoting and then refuting them. This can be called direct exegesis. In this hermeneutical strategy, individual sentences or even words are deconstructed and reinterpreted. Clear instances are the discussions of Genesis 3 by Blavatsky and the *Woman's Bible* contributors. Secondly, in a less formally exegetic modus, we find, for instance, Vivien's new version of Genesis, where Satan becomes a benevolent creator of woman. The original words from scripture are not present here, having been wholly replaced by a counter-myth. Other

works in the same spirit (Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*, Conway's lauding of Lilith, Casati's embracing of the serpent as an ally or an identity for herself, Marie Madeleine's lesbian fallen angels, and the liberator Devils of MacLane, Warner, and Kallas) are also counter-myths that are constructed without direct and methodical disassembling of the hegemonic varieties they replace and overturn.[6] While these texts are rife with subversive positive allusions to, for example, the Fall, they do not enter into detailed protest exegesis. With Vivien, scripture is replaced with something following the same format of numbered verses and using a scriptural language, while the other texts adhere to secular conventions of prose and poetry that make them less like an immediate alternative to the verses in the Bible.

All of the aforementioned approaches are at their core hermeneutical strategies to subvert hegemonic understandings of Holy Writ by counter-readings. They differ, however, in whether they lock horns directly with the Bible, or reinterpret its myths by presenting partly inverted versions without first making the effort to refute the hegemonic version. We should note that some texts in the latter category (e.g. the prelude to *The Revolt of Islam*) do contain passages where the conventional understanding is explicitly critiqued, albeit without mention of specific Bible verses. Many Satanic feminist products also draw on non-biblical elements of Christian mythology, such as the idea of Satan as female or the concept of the demon lover. In these cases, there is no Bible passage to reference and invert directly. It is hence only natural that the undermining pertains more to a general understanding than to any particular text.

Witches can also be counted to this basically non-biblical category. At the time of the witch persecutions, perceptions of them served patriarchal ends, and the figure lived on as a derogatory metaphor used against women. The decision made by Warner, Vivien, and others to "reclaim" witches as emblems of female power was a refusal to accept a negative symbol of supposedly bad aspects of womanhood. Their hermeneutic energy was expended on a rather general image of the witch, which they then proceeded to produce a counter-discursive version of. Those authors (Michelet, Gage) who dealt with the figure of the witch in the more immediate of the two manners discussed directed their hermeneutical efforts towards specific historical sources and the understanding of witches found in them. The primary target here was the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and its view of witches as the ultimate (feminine) evil. This early modern work became their direct

object of hermeneutical exertion. Their new view of the witches as noble rebels may have been more or less innovative, but the opinion of these figures held by most in the nineteenth century was certainly not in accordance with that of Sprenger and Institoris (witches as a dangerous Devil-worshipping sect infiltrating society). The real subversion of hegemonic ideologies therefore lay in the negative role the church was allowed to play in their proposed new understanding of the historical phenomenon.[7]

Witches, and by extension their master Satan (as a symbol), were benevolent in the eyes of these authors because they opposed an oppressive historical Christianity, which was moreover held up as severely misogynist. The ultimate recipient of this critique was, naturally, nineteenth-century Christianity, not its historical equivalent. Interestingly, Michelet, Leland, and Gage decided to more or less retain the notion of witches being in league with Satan (in Leland's case this may have been simply because of the content of the source material he claimed was handed to him—he even expressed some concern with its more diabolical features), instead of making them misunderstood pagans or innocent victims. This brings us to the next question.

How far is the inversion of Christian myth taken? The degree of inversion is often a difficult thing to capture precisely. For example: Matilda Joslyn Gage accepted the old Christian understanding of witches as Satanists, instead of declaring these women unfairly accused. Simultaneously, she (at least in this specific context) acceded to the premise (provided to her source Michelet by Romantic Satanism) that the Devil is a positive symbol of liberation, and by extension that Satanism can be seen as a feminist rebellion against patriarchal Christianity. However, this only inverts one aspect of the witch mythology (the part stipulating that Satan and his followers are evil). The other dimensions are paradoxically (re)affirmed. Witches did have miraculous powers, they were subversive Satanists conspiring against the heavenly and worldly order, and so on. In mainstream Christianity, these views had been more or less discarded by Gage's time. She thus gives new life to them in a way that can be deemed surprising. Blavatsky, though navigating in an unclear way between allegory and what sounds quite literal, similarly reaffirms the basic veracity of the Genesis 3 narrative. Of course, she interprets its consequences very differently—inverting them to something positive. But the religious myth itself is ratified as significant and "true".

Blavatsky presents a counter-myth every bit as religious as that which she intended it to oust, and her parasitic version moreover incorporates the old myth rather than discards it. Gage can also be said to do so, if to a lesser degree, in her counter-myth of witchcraft, with its insistence on the witches' peculiar amount of Pacinian corpuscules and resulting supernormal (if not supernatural in a strict sense) abilities. The old myth of the witch is thus endorsed to an extent.

In *The Woman's Bible*, we are also seemingly dealing—in several of the cases—with women who still consider the Bible authoritative but want to modify interpretations of the text. These modifications extend all the way to a praise of the Edenic serpent that would make any Ophite Gnostic (or Theosophist) proud and show an awareness of the constructed nature of the Bible itself as well as traditions of reading it. But the Bible is still not discarded as insignificant and a thing of the past. Declaring something irrelevant is perhaps a more efficient way of breaking free from devices legitimating the hegemonic. Drawing on Richard Terdiman, I stated in chapter 1 that a counter-reading typically aims to destabilize rather than supersede the normative reading. We can add here that it does not, in most of my examples, aim to eliminate the ultimate source either, merely to sabotage the hegemonic understanding of it. Inverting means partly accepting, in many cases.

The witches of Warner, Michelet, and Leland could be analysed along the same lines as Blavatsky. However, the claims to authority differ significantly between these texts. Blavatsky professes to have esoteric insight into the mysteries of the cosmos and ultimately speaks with the voice of a religious prophet proclaiming an inverse exegesis. Warner, at the opposite end, represents a playful literary inversion, which, though destabilizing, certainly does not make truth claims of the sort we find in *The Secret Doctrine*. It may be fiction with a message, but it is still fiction. Charles Leland's *Aradia*, in contrast, gives us someone else's religious Satanic counter-myth, which he keeps a scholarly distance from. It is he, however, who represents it as feminist. The inversion of myth in *Aradia*, which is far-reaching, is thus—intentionally or unintentionally—made to serve a political purpose, where counter-mythical narrative mirrors an inversion or a destabilization of the current gender order. Although clearly allegorical, Michelet's emphasis on Satan (much less prominent in Gage and Leland) reinscribes Satan as a figure of consequence, once again showing the reifying tendencies of many

inversions. As a celebrated historian, Michelet uses his scholarly credentials to lend weight to his fanciful narrative, which thus gains the "objective" authority of academic history writing.

The disturbingly ambivalent portrayals of women in league with Satan as powerful and self-reliant in Gothic novels like *Vathek, The Monk*, and *Zofloya* had paved the way for more consistent Satanic feminist inversions. These were not by any means "full" inversions (such are in fact rarely found at all, anywhere), but they—just like many Decadent texts—showed a certain sympathy for their anti-heroines, which fed into the cultural developments facilitating Satanic feminism.

The ultimate source of mythical inversions was primarily the Romantic works that followed shortly after the rise of the Gothic genre. In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley had framed an epic story of revolution with feminist features in a mythological narrative where Satan is a noble rebel. This may be his most straightforward inversion, as he otherwise often inserted caveats regarding the notion of Satan as good and heroic. Renée Vivien's 'La Genèse profane' also represents an inversion in that God is portrayed as an evil figure, with Satan as a positive co-creator, who counters every brash, violent, and negative creation by God with something languid, feminine, and beautiful. Yet, looking at her whole production there is some ambiguity in Vivien's Satan, as is often the case. Not everyone might agree that lesbianism and the night, to name two things with which she associates the Fallen Angel, are preferable to heterosexuality and daytime.[8] The inversion, then, depends on an additional inversion where not only Satan but also a whole host of other things are inverted. 'Evil, be thou my good', as it were, to quote Milton. MacLane's inversions are also exceedingly complex. She lets her Satan be tied up not only with epicureanism and liberty from constraints upon women but also with morbidity and dishonesty (thus retaining certain traditional traits of Satan). In her case, however, this is not part of a consistent counter-discourse of inversion. Unlike Vivien, she was not embedded in a Decadent genre and subculture where such consistency was, in a way, customary (the term *Decadent*, as a self-description, itself being a semantic inversion where something earlier seen as negative is celebrated). Her Satan, though a positive symbol of freedom for her, preserves many of his negative traits from Christian discourse on the figure.

As these examples show, it is quite rare for inversion to be taken all the way, even in a counter-discourse doing something as radical as embracing

Satan as its icon of goodness. Inversion as such tends to be fraught with ambiguities, inconsistencies, and paradoxes, and the inverse exegesis and counter-myths of Satanic feminism are no exception.

What seems to be problematic when using Satan as a paragon of feminism, and how do the figures in question deal with this? Male authors contributing to the discourse of Satanic feminism, like Shelley and Michelet, perceived nothing incongruous with making Satan the liberator of woman. As far as one can tell, this goes for many of the women as well, including Gage, Warner, and Aino Kallas. In the case of the last two, Satan is held up as a being of nature, contrasted with the repressive civilization ruled by mortal males. Hereby, Satan is aligned with that which is often culturally coded as feminine (nature). Such moves would appear at least partly to serve the strategic purpose of dissolving what might be taken as a paradox: being liberated from male oppression by the intervention of another male. Placing Satan on the feminine side of the cosmos in some sense would have alleviated the potential trouble inherent in this issue. Some women even seem to have felt that an explicit identification of Satan with the feminine as such was needed for this figure to be usable as a symbol of women's value and empowerment. Renée Vivien, who professed to abhor all things masculine, made Satan the creator of woman and the feminine ("feminine" being a word that could be read as equivalent to "good" in her usage) things in the world. Judging from the consistent gendering of God as a "he" in the drastically dichotomized text in question, and the silence on Satan's gender, it is logical to read the Devil as female here (there are also additional factors making this plausible, discussed in chapter 8). This idea had a long prehistory in Christian iconography, and also in works of fantastic literature like Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* (and to some extent Gautier's 'La Morte amoureuse').[9]

The conception of Satan as an emancipator of woman seems to have been taken as unproblematic by most authors, which should likely be seen in the context of his identical function for the oppressed in general in the discourse of a broader radical milieu. The frustration with Satan as an inappropriately masculine emblem in the context of a feminist struggle might to an extent be something that scholars in our own time project backwards on the historical texts (see examples in chapters 8, 10, and 11). It is striking, however, that few women (MacLane's virile demon lover being something of an exception)

concurred with the Romantic view of Satan as a brawny, heroic warrior swinging his sword at the heavens. Their vision, instead, could be of, for example, a Socratic conversation partner (*The Woman's Bible*), a loving husband with ideals of equality (Collier), an asexual and kindly old gardener attentive to all women's significance (Warner), or a feminized figure in opposition to everything masculine in the universe (Vivien). In such approaches to the Devil, which contrast with that typical of early literary Satanism, we can perhaps after all perceive a distancing from a blatantly masculine ideal that might have been difficult to reconcile with an upvaluation of the feminine.

What are the transitory stages and grey areas between Demonized feminism and Satanic feminism? As we have seen numerous examples of, there is a constant tension (and circularity) between the expressions of Satanic feminism and the demonization of independent, strong women and explicit feminists. For example, in most of the Gothic texts discussed in chapter 5, powerful females with a close relation to the Devil (or who even are the Devil) are portrayed in a way that could be seen as misogynist caricatures. Yet, they are allowed to present quite convincing arguments in a manner entailing the same "problems" that Milton's similar generosity towards Lucifer caused. Hereby, these passages have seriously subversive implications. There is also a degree of sympathy for these villains present, or at least a troubling, "unfitting" fascination with them. This is the same attitude we find in a score of Decadent works, with, for example, Wratislaw, Mendès, and Przybyszewski's treatments of the demonic feminine being paradigmatic. Huysmans's Mme Chantelouve was painted in what the author felt was very dark colours but became an object of identification among bohemian women. Correspondingly, Pre-Raphaelite witches are depicted as powerful, beautiful, and self-governing in a way that approaches idealization and were probably perceived favourably by some women. Even so, these figures were hardly intended as positive representations.

The Luciferian lesbians in poems by Baudelaire and Swinburne, as well as Mendès's novel, also have this ambivalent character. Vivien can be taken as an example of a woman whose own work relates directly to such ambiguous representations, but who obviously found the imagery in question empowering, and therefore developed it in an explicitly feminist direction. It is in this same fashion that Warner, Kallas, and others can be understood.

Further, they were most likely aware in some way of the demonization of feminists, using witch and Devil imagery, that was prevalent in the period, and this probably helped influence their choice to depict a connection between feminism and Satanism—but in a rebellious, counter-discursive manner. Displays of Satanic feminism can hence be taken as a sarcastic parody of the literal and figurative connecting of the demonic and struggles for women's rights.

Many of the women we have met in the study are polyvocal in their borrowings from this cluster of motifs, and their endeavours can be seen as feminist statements as well as affirmations of feminism and independent females (in a less political sense) being something shady and infernal. For example, the sinister role-playing of Bernhardt, Casati, and Bara could be read both ways, but certainly held one rather plausible—perhaps the most plausible—meaning where their personae functioned as rebellious displays of anti-patriarchal sentiments targeting Christianity as culpable in the oppression of women. The wearing of jewellery glamorizing and glorifying Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit and her friendly relation to the serpent held an analogous meaning. At the same time, there is no documentable explicit feminism here, and artefacts and personae like these therefore exist in the grey area between Demonized feminism and Satanic feminism. At times, it is also possible to see a potential allure in the demonic as portrayed in the anti-feminist works. An example of this is the caricature of Victoria Woodhull as Mrs Satan, where the plight of the good and pious woman carrying her drunkard husband on her back can hardly have looked very appealing. Surely, some felt Mrs Satan was the more winsome alternative.

Pro-feminist appropriations of demonic motifs must additionally have strengthened such connotations among anti-feminists and the general public. What we can observe in this context is therefore a rather intriguing circularity, where the feminists in fact help sustain and perpetuate a misogynist tradition whilst subverting it. In the same way, the continued patriarchal use of the motifs will, in light of the deconstructions of them being disseminated simultaneously, have been part of the destabilization process (in a time when Satan was becoming a floating signifier, it would perhaps have been more tactical for conservative Christians to leave this tradition be).

The questions posed at the outset being answered, I will now conclude with a few additional ruminations. To begin with, I would once more like to underscore that Satanic feminism, like any discourse (or counter-discourse), overlaps with several other discourses, such as literary genres (Gothic, Romantic, and Decadent literature being singled out as particularly important in the present study) and esotericism. These often function as a structuring factor, and their specific conventions determine how the theme of Satanic feminism can be expressed. For example, the tragic ending of *Sudenmorsian* can be seen as the product of an adherence to the established Gothic tradition.[10] The trailblazing literary genre, which all later examples here can be seen as direct descendants of, is—as repeatedly stated—Romanticism. The strategic pro-Satanic counter-readings of Christian mythology begin there and then. All our examples owe some sort of debt of gratitude to this genre. The familiarity many readers and producers of later Satanic feminist works would have had with Romanticism (specifically, its positive portraits of the Devil) is certain to have influenced how they understood or created, respectively, the Satanic feminist texts of the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Romanticism is therefore a constantly present intertext (both at the producing and receiving end), but there are, of course, others of significance as well.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a broader context for Satanic feminism —and thus also another intertext in the Kristevan sense—was the use of Satanism as a language of political resistance. This had started to an extent already with the Romantics, but Satanism eventually became part of purely political, non-literary articulations. Proudhon was a pioneer in this respect and sprinkled several of his works (published in 1846, 1851, and 1858) with pro-Luciferian outbursts. Bakunin followed suit in *Dieu et l'etat* (1871, published 1882), and treading in his footsteps we find, for example, numerous Swedish socialists (in a plethora of publications, ca. 1886–1907), the American anarchist journal *Lucifer the Light-bearer* (1883–1907) and Henry Tichenor's *The Sorceries and Scandals of Satan* (1917). Even for those who were not socialists, the presence of such demonic-political counter-discourse must have been suggestive of Satan's suitability as a symbol of rebellion and cultural critique. Literary texts like Nobel Prize winner (1906) Giosuè Carducci's 'Inno a Satana' (1863, published 1865) shared many of the progressive, anticlerical and aggressively pro-scientific sentiments of the socialists. The radical Satanic individualism of the

Romantics—a feature clearly present among many of the Satanic feminists—was kept alive in poems like Whitman's 'Chanting the Square Deific' (1881–1882) and the 1890s works of Przybyszewski. A version of the same ethos can in a way be found in Anatole France's *La Révolte des anges* (1914), and, as late as 1929, D. H. Lawrence was writing pieces (published in *Last Poems*, 1932) very much in tune with Shelley's celebrations of Lucifer. Hence, political and literary Satanism (often overlapping categories) was a living tradition during the entire nineteenth century proper, and further up until World War II. Satanic feminism should at all times be understood as part of this broader literary and political tradition.

Even in instances where an author was unaware of earlier examples of Satanic feminism, the person simply cannot have been blind to the tradition of Romantic Satanism, which any educated person was familiar with in the time period (though the specific text that combined it with feminism, *The Revolt of Islam*, was in fact a lot less popular than, for example, *Prometheus Unbound*). Left-wing political use of the figure is also likely to have been quite well-known. The material as a whole showcases a circularity between literature (poetry, prose fiction), politics (socialism, feminism), and esotericism (especially Theosophy). From the outset, Romantic Satanism was an expression of revolutionary, anticlerical, and anti-royalist political sentiments. Political thinkers like Bakunin and the Swedish socialists (some of whom were keen readers of Byron and Shelley) therefore picked up the motif, in most cases directly from the Romantics. Bakunin's rendering of the Eden myth was quite literary, almost resembling a miniscule short story or fable, and literary expressions of Satanism were generally political throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Both, in other words, had elements of the other in them. Blavatsky's esoteric depiction of Satan as a saviour must in turn be seen in light of these predecessors, and the political (feminist) semi-Satanist reinterpretations of the Bible performed by Stanton and her collaborators were likely inspired by Theosophical speculations. MacLane professed Theosophical sympathies, and others among our examples were also directly or indirectly aware of Blavatsky's Luciferian mysticism. The theme thus moves in and out of the realms of literature (and visual and performative art, for that matter), esotericism, and politics, often being an expression of all three at the same time and showing clear signs of influences having flown freely in all directions.

Surveying the texts, it is clear that they display quite differing degrees of Satanic content. It ranges from a mere sisterly sympathy for Eve, enthusiasm for witches, and so on, to forthright symbolic alliances with Satan against God the Father. Towards the full-blown end of the scale we find, for example, Vivien and Warner. The contributors to *The Woman's Bible* are at the other end of it, where outspoken celebrations of Satan, named as such, are not prominent. In their case, they laud the serpent and Eve, but are hesitant in clearly identifying the former with the Devil. Not explicitly denying this identification in a way affirms it, however, since it has been the dominant reading during most of Western history.

The counter-myths constructed in the works scrutinized here mostly belong to the category that we can call *myths of resistance* (paraphrasing Bruce Lincoln's 'religions of resistance').[11] Their central trait is thus a refusal to agree with the postulations of hegemonic religion. Negation, inversion, protest, even blasphemy, are core features. An even more radical form of counter-myth would be the *myths of revolution*, which advocate direct action.[12] Some Satanic feminists have clear tendencies in this direction. Shelley, for example, was something of a real-life rabble-rouser, whose literary counter-myths are closely aligned to these proclivities. Gage, Stanton, and their circle were political activists whose interest in witches and the serpent of Eden was directly motivated by this. Most of the individuals we have met in this book, however, seem to have been frustrated with patriarchy primarily on a personal level, even if they could, like Vivien or Warner, simultaneously express awareness of the problem as one relevant to all women. Even so, they did not present any "solutions" in a political sense, although their counter-myths are a clear form of symbolic resistance.

The texts of Satanic feminism all exhibit disruptive and dissident modes of reading scripture or relating to Christian traditions concerning woman and the Devil. In short, they employ what Gnosticism scholar Birger Pearson calls the 'hermeneutical principle … of revolt'.[13] I would like to return to Hans Jonas's words about Gnostic Bible interpretations quoted in the introduction. In his view, they represent something 'more serious than a merely sentimental siding with the underdog, let alone mere indulgence in speculative freedom'. They are, he says, a type of allegory 'made to carry the bravado of non-conformity'.[14] I am inclined to view my objects of study along the same lines, even in the cases where there is no explicit declaration of feminist sympathies. Indeed, an important thing that needs to be borne in

mind concerning expressions of Satanic feminism is that not all contributors may have had well thought-out feminist intentions. Some, for instance, Blavatsky, might not have any deliberate designs in this direction at all (though this is unlikely, given the influx into Theosophy of feminists and the implications of counter-reading Genesis 3 for her own position as a female religious leader). Regardless, it is fully possible—I have argued—to label Blavatsky, Bernhardt, Casati, and others contributors to Satanic feminism all the same, since what they produced held such ramifications and resonances.[15] Regarding the other, more purposeful Satanic feminists I would like to conclude by considering them in light of Lincoln's three approaches to overthrowing a hegemonic myth that legitimates the social order one wants to topple. First, its legitimacy can be *challenged*. Secondly, it can be *replaced* with a narrative from a different category (such as a fable, legend, or history) that is infused with a new authority. Thirdly, the original myth can be *reinterpreted* so as no longer to legitimate the present power structure.[16]

Looking at our primary examples, the strategy of *reinterpretation* is omnipresent, as that is what Satanism is all about (reinterpreting Satan as a positive figure, and for example rereading Genesis 3 as a tale of mankind's liberation from tyranny). This could in turn be said to *challenge* the legitimacy of Christian myth but does not necessarily entail that it is rejected as mere fiction made up by oppressors. Blavatsky explicitly says that there is a true, esoteric core in Christian myth, which has been misunderstood by the theologians. Others seem to have comparable tendencies in their attitude towards the Bible, but often waver between actively delegitimating it as man-made—rather than divinely revealed—and treating it with a special reverence. *The Woman's Bible* is a case in point. Most commonly, however, the Bible is implicitly challenged by reinterpretations so drastic as to turn everything on its head. *Replacement* is seldom part of what we can observe here, since no wholly new narrative is elevated to the status of religious myth.[17] In many cases, short stories, novels, and poetry offer narratives drawing on Christian myth, but these are not presented in a manner where any claims are made to belong to the same ontological category as religious myth. In a way, we could still see this as a form of replacement, which results in a delegitimation of Christian myth (akin to the results of the strategy of challenging myth), though relativization would perhaps be a more precise term. To give some illustrations from our material: the Bible's creation story is retold in a conflicting manner by Vivien (who inserts Satan as a benign

feminine counter-creator, or co-creator), Christian early modern narratives of witchcraft are substituted with eulogizing tales of virtuous Satanist witches by several authors, MacLane reframes the Fall as an epicurean event, Warner playfully lets an emancipated woman offer a compassionate Satan an apple, Kallas draws a parallel between throwing off the yoke of patriarchal society and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit, and so on. Putting forward such alternative stories renders a tale told in the Bible or in Christian tradition one among several versions, not the one and only truth. Although most of the objects of study here did not, like Blavatsky, claim to present anything resembling revealed, transcendental wisdom, they still proposed provocative alternatives that in some sense helped undermine the authority of the hegemonic varieties—and the patriarchal social structures bound up with them.

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[1] Dinesen [Blixen] 1934, p. 88.

[2] It should be mentioned here that Christ was often feminized in terms of temperament and some bodily traits in a variety of nineteenth-century discourses, but that lies beyond the scope of the present study.

[3] Quite possibly, subversive narratives concerning God and Satan may have been created, for instance, in the oral culture of peasant women as well, but this is not part of the material that I have investigated (and it is likely to be difficult to find documentation of it, if it even existed). Hereby, my process of selection as such also admittedly creates a bias towards products of the educated classes.

[4] Queen Victoria did not hold much formal power, as Great Britain was a constitutional monarchy, but she possessed a formidable official prestige and wielded vast informal influence extending all the way to legislation and foreign policies.

[5] Male producers of Satanic feminist discourse follow the same pattern. Although a future baronet and quite popular among the reading audience, a bold insurrectionist like Percy Shelley held no actual political authority. Authors like Michelet (fired from his job as a university teacher and his post at the national archives) or Conway were in similar positions. Men such as Shelley, Michelet, and Conway clearly set out to critique dominant mythologies and their social consequences by providing counter-readings (Conway) or entire counter-myths (Shelley, Michelet). In all three cases, this overlapped with straightforward political agitation in other contexts and should be considered part of a larger progressive, anticlerical project.

[6] Conway's speculations about Lilith did not, of course, relate to anything found in the Bible, but to later Jewish traditions that had also seeped out into gentile culture. The hermeneutical principle, however, remains the same.

[7] It should be noted, though, that this negative, anticlerical view of Christianity's role in history held real political influence in France at the end of the century and was itself a competitor for hegemony.

[8] It is here notable that Vivien's inversion inevitably reifies extremely stereotypical correspondences between "the feminine" and the moon, the night, that which is gentle, etc.

[9] Some have wanted to interpret Sylvia Townsend Warner's Devil as feminine as well, but this has no real basis in what the text says.

[10] The terms *discourse, genre*, and *tradition* can to some extent be seen as overlapping, if not identical, but there is no space to further develop this point here.

[11] On this paraphrasing, see chapter 1.

[12] Cf. Lincoln 2008, pp. 79–85.

[13] Pearson 1990, p. 37.

[14] Jonas 1958/1992, p. 95.

[15] Here we also need to bear in mind that aesthetic-artistic, esoteric, and feminist purposes (to name but a few motivations) are not at all mutually exclusive.

[16] Lincoln 1989, p. 25.

[17] Blavatsky's Theosophical cosmology can be seen as an exception, as can Gage's occult speculations concerning the special powers of witches.

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